



THE FAMILY GOD IN OLD BABYLONIAN AND ESPECIALLY IN OLD ASSYRIAN SOURCES

Author(s): Klaas R. Veenhof

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BY
Klaas R. VEENHOF

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *The ideas of Albrecht Alt*

The concept of “the god of the father” is best known from the stories about the Hebrew patriarchs in the book of Genesis, where “the father” is in the first place Abraham, whose encounter with God is narrated in Genesis 12 and following chapters and was analyzed in 1929 in A. Alt’s famous study “Der Gott der Väter”.¹ Alt assumed that the designation “god of PN” stemmed from the time when the relevant cult first developed and was called after the person who had founded it. This approach was in line with the concept of the “personal god” that received much attention in later years, when the study of the ancient Near East witnessed a growing interest in the private religion, documented in personal names, individual prayers and some literary compositions.² While this concept remained important, Assyriologists specialized in the Old Babylonian period later called attention to the fact that textual evidence in practice documents indicated that individuals speaking of “my god” and calling themselves “his servant” in most cases referred to what was their “family god”.³ This concept later provided the title for Van der Toorn’s book *Family Religion*. This was a valuable correction, but it had been anticipated by Alt’s own observation on similar designations in later Semitic and Greek memorial and dedicatory inscriptions of the Nabataeans and from Palmyra. They showed that in some cases the same “god of PN” was venerated during several generations by members of the same family and was occasionally even designated as “ancestral god” (*theos patroios*), which must refer to a “dieser Familie eigentümliche Kultus”.⁴

Alt considered these inscriptional data relevant not only because of a terminological similarity (“the god of PN”), but also because of a typological and social one. For they stemmed from people who, much later, but in the same way as the early Israelites, “aus den nomadischen Lebensverhältnissen der arabischen Wüste in die Kultur Palästinas und Syriens übertraten”. The gods that occur in these texts, according to Alt, are “Götter ohne Eigennamen, die nur durch die genitivische Beifügung eines menschlichen Personennamens zu dem allgemeinen Gottheitsprädikats bezeichnet sind”.⁵ And he also noted a development (p. 59), whereby these “old, modest designations” were replaced by the names of some “great gods” –Dusares in Petra, Ba’al-šamên in Bosra, Malak-Bêl in Palmyra– which he considered “Verschmelzungen... die erst auf dem Boden des Kulturlandes vollzogen worden sein können”. In a similar way, the basically anonymous deity or numen, who had revealed himself to Abraham in due time, in Canaan, would have been equated with identifiable manifestations of the god El, linked to particular cultic centres.

The validity of these observations has been disputed. In particular, whether the God who revealed himself to the Hebrew patriarchs was originally also “a god without proper name” and an “itinerant deity”, whose identification with the named manifestations of El in Canaan was secondary.⁶ Here the new comparative material is important, because it reveals, as elaborated by Van der Toorn, that in early Mesopotami, gods

1. BWANT III/12 (Stuttgart 1929), reprinted in S. Hermann (ed.), Albrecht Alt. *Grundfragen der Geschichte des Volkes Israel. Eine Auswahl aus den “Kleinen Schriften”* (München 1970), 21-98. The inscriptions used for comparison are edited on p. 88-97, “Die inschriftliche Belege”.

2. Epitomized by the Sumerian composition “A man and his god”, and by the Akkadian so-called *din gir. šà. dib. ba*-prayers, uttered to reconcile an angered personal god; see W.G. Lambert, *JNES* 33: 267-327, and now Margaret Jaques, *Mon dieu qu’ai-je fait? Les din gir. šà. dab(5). ba et la piété privée en Mésopotamie* (OBO 273; Fribourg-Göttingen 2015), especially ch. V.

3. M. Stol in RA 74: 187-188, and in his study Old Babylonian Personal Names, *SEL* 8: 205-207, “Family god”, where he also deals with the fact that the name of the family god does not systematically appear as theophorous element in the names of the family members. Elaborated and fuller documented in D. Charpin, *Les divinités familiales des Babyloniens d’après les légendes de leurs sceaux-cylindres*, in Ö. Tunca (ed.), *De la Babylonie à la Syrie en passant par Mari. Mélanges offerts à Monsieur J.-R. Kupper à l’occasion de son 70^e anniversaire* (Liège 1990) 59-78.

4. In *PJB* 36: 102, 2, *Zum Gott der Väter*, Alt mentioned a new example, found in a Greek inscription from the Haurân, where members of a tribe, acting as “Kultgenossenschaft”, together built a shrine for “the god of Ἀμείριος”. One could also mention a stela from Palmyra (CIS ii 3978), dedicated by two men, presumably members of an Arabic clan, to “the god of their father” (*lh’ bwhn*).

5. He considered Nabataean texts mentioning “the god of our lord” “eine Sonderform königlicher und staatlicher Religion”, referring to the main state god Dusares as the god of the ruling king.

6. These views were discussed and rejected in *Family Religion*, Ch. 10, see especially p. 261. See also Van der Toorn’s remarks on Amorrite cults (p. 88) and on the relation between theophoric kinship names and divine names.

designated as “your god” or “the god of my/our father” (etc.) were not anonymous or itinerant, but gods known by name, attested and venerated as members of the local panthea.

1.2. An ancient nomadic, “Amorrite” tradition?

Alt’s view also had a chronological implication. If the designation “the god of the father” refers to his encounter with a specific person, it must refer to the time when the relevant cult originated, in the case of the Hebrew patriarchs that of Israel’s prehistory. He accordingly claimed that what the narratives say about “the god of the father” cannot be considered “a late, purely literary creation without deep roots,” as many Old Testament scholars believed, but must reflect a genuine, ancient element of the Israelite tradition, used by later writers. This view has encountered severe criticism from scholars who consider the narratives of Genesis late products, unsuitable for a historical reconstruction of the so-called “patriarchal age”. Nevertheless, many scholars still admit that “the god of the father” is an ancient element, that somehow survived in the stories written down much later. Van der Toorn (*Family Religion* 264) believes that in Israel, in the 8th century BCE, “family religion, with its characteristic worship of ‘the god of the father’ was still alive, if not in fact then at least in the minds of the audience”.

In using Mesopotamian data, Van der Toorn, as the title of part 1 of his book shows, focused on Babylonia, in particular on the Old Babylonian period. But he also used some textual data from ancient Assur to document essential features, such as the invocation of the family god together with the ghosts of the ancestors as “protectors of the moral integrity of the family” (p. 63) and the fact that “the devotion to a particular deity ran in the family”, since the same god could be referred to indiscriminately as “your god” and “the god of your father”.⁷ Actually, already Alt⁸ had mentioned this last feature, and it was noted by J. Lewy, the pioneer of Old Assyrian studies, already in 1934,⁹ on the basis a few Old Assyrian letters, where “the god of my/your father” could be identified with a particular god, *in casu* Ilabrat. He therefore disagreed with Alt’s idea that “the god of the father” was an anonymous numen, and not from the start a particular deity. Alt, however, considered the Old Assyrian evidence not relevant, because the designation “god of PN” was not attested there, and there was no evidence for a continuous cult of such “Sondergottheiten”.¹⁰ Moreover, the Hebrew patriarchs had been nomads, and the situation in the city of Assur, with its urban temples and pantheon, was different. But Lewy, apparently impressed by Alt’s claim of tribal, nomadic roots of “the god of the father”, claimed that the inhabitants of Assur also had nomadic origins¹¹ and, once settled in Assur, had not given up the traditional veneration of their ancestral gods. Much later he elaborated this view and presented evidence that, in some OA letters, “the god of my/your/our father” was identified as the god Amurru. With much acumen, he collected indications to prove that OA families “characterized as descendants of Western Semites by the name of one or the other of their members, continued to be worshippers of Amurru and were known as such”.¹² While Lewy’s criticism of Alt’s idea of an originally anonymous deity or numen seems justified, his “Amorrite thesis” is not. Since Lewy formulated it, the difficult issues of the origin, name and nature of the god Amurru have received a lot of scholarly attention, especially the association of his name with the geographic (and later also ethnic) term Amurru. Kupper (1961, 61), while mentioning certain links of the god with the steppe –notably his repeated association in seal inscriptions with the moon-god Šin and his description as “the one who dwells in the steppe” (k u r = “steppe”, p. 73)– states in his conclusion that the “Amorrites did not play a part in the birth of their presumed tribal god”, who was a product of Babylonian theological speculations. Similarly, Beaulieu (2005, 33) suggested that

7. See also p. 101⁴⁰, 109^{86,88}, 112¹⁰¹ and 126⁴⁶.

8. *Der Gott*, 51 note 1, a later addition between brackets, for Lewy’s article (see next note) was published five years after Alt’s study.

9. Les textes paléo-assyriens et l’Ancien Testament, *RHR* 110: 29-65, esp. 50-52.

10. He maintained this objection in *Zum ‘Gott der Väter’* (above note 4), 102-103, under 2, in almost the same words.

11. In the article mentioned in note 9 he even used the designation “les négociants assyriens d’origine amorrhéenne”.

12. In *Amurritica*, *HUCA* 32: 31-74; the quote is from p. 41. On p. 42-43 he anticipated doubts about his thesis, by asserting “that the number of Assyrians who saw in Amurru the god of their ancestors was larger than it might seem”, claiming that the invocation of “Ištar Star” alongside Amurru showed that “the worshippers of Ištar Star were wont to revere Amurru”.

Amurru as “a divine concept was a secondary construct derived from the geographic and ethnic meaning of the term Amurru”, for which he finds support in the fact that, even when Amurru is used as a geographical term in Old Assyrian, it is prefixed with the divine determinative.¹³ And Durand (2008, 189) even suggested that the name might simply mean “the Amorrite (deity)” and be a hypostasized epithet that hides the name of a particular god.¹⁴ Whatever his origin and the meaning of his name, it is clear that, in OA and Old Babylonian periods, Amurru does not figure as a nomadic, “Amorrite” god, but as an established member of the urban pantheon, venerated in Assur and in many cities in Babylonia.¹⁵ And there is also no evidence for the cult of “Amorrite gods”.¹⁶ In fact, the Amorrite element in ancient Assur is extremely limited; there are just a handful of Amorrite personal names among the thousands of names we know, and almost no Amorrite loanwords.¹⁷

1.3. A comparative approach

Irrespective of this issue of cultural and historical origins,¹⁸ Lewy’s conviction, that the Old Assyrian evidence for “the god of my/our/your father” –still very limited when Alt wrote his study– asks for a comparison with the patriarchal data, is justified, as Van der Toorn’s use of it demonstrates. Since it has increased enormously in the two decades since *Family Religion* was published, I offer below an overview and interpretation of the data that are now available, which supplements and occasionally corrects what was thus far known.¹⁹ But I begin with remarks on the Old Babylonian period to supplement and specify some of Van der Toorn’s data, also stimulated by Sallaberger’s new study of the Old Babylonian “Alltagsbriefe”,²⁰ which are our main source of information on this feature.

13. See for the OA data *OBO* 160/5: 97, note 426. We now also have a spelling without the divine determinative, in n/k 522:4, *ištu libbi/MAR.TU-im* (courtesy of C. Günbatti).

14. He also notes that none of his predicates in theophoric personal names reveals his specific nature, a conclusion already reached by Kupper (1961: 57), who also notes (p. 84) that in Babylonia Amurru does not occur in Amorrite personal names. But Durand, who also refers to an inscribed stele (described in a letter) that shows Zimri-lim in praying gesture in front of Amurru, suggests that the god’s poor attestation at Mari –he does not occur in the known lists of gods– could be “une erreur de perspective”, due to the nature of the textual documentation, while Amurru was in fact not unimportant.

15. See for *Mar.tu/Amurru*, his nature, the way he gained a place in the Mesopotamian pantheon, also J. Klein, *The God Martu in Sumerian Literature*, in I. L. Finkel - M.J. Geller (eds.), *Sumerian Gods and their Representations* (Groningen 1997) 99-116; Richter 1999: 116-119 (in Nippur) and 328-331 (in Larsa); and Schwemer (2001: 198-200) (on the relation between *Iškur/Adad* and *Mar.tu/Amurru*).

16. The claim, made in *Amurritica* 37-40, that the god Anna is an “old West Semitic god, a deity of immigrants from the “Western Land”... “still venerated in Assur as shown by the occurrence of a priest of Anna” (in TC 3, 181:8), has proved to be wrong. Anna is the main god of the city of Kanesh, the seat of the principal Assyrian trading colony in Anatolia, and the name of his priest –*Azu*– is not Assyrian; see Veenhof (2008: 236, 1). The Anatolian god Anna must be distinguished from the Sumerian deity designated as AN.NA, who is regularly mentioned in Old Babylonian seal inscriptions as father of the god Amurru. It is, however, not impossible that Anna was venerated in Assur, considering his occurrence as theophoric element in personal names.

17. *GOA* § 4.4.4 lists only two Amorite loanwords, *aqdamātum* and *kašūm*, both geographical terms, not surprising, because the Assyrian caravans between the Khabur and the Balikh crossed an area which they called Amurru (see *OBO* 160/5: 97-98).

18. Mesopotamian texts do contain references that refer to a person’s tribal origin or his belonging to a particular clan; see Stol (2004: 705-706, § 6.3), “Der Ahnherr”.

19. I gave a short summary of available data in Veenhof (2014 § 6.3), “Care for the Ancestors and Veneration of the Family God”.

20. Sallaberger (1996).

2. THE OLD BABYLONIAN EVIDENCE²¹

The Old Babylonian evidence for the “personal god” as the god of a particular family derives mainly from two kinds of written sources.²² In the first place the legends of Old Babylonian cylinder seals, whose owners identify themselves as servant of a particular god, and where we find cases of a grandfather, a father and his son(s) or brothers all mentioning the same god. That the same god was venerated by successive generations of a family is not surprising and is in line with the fact that also professions, offices and occasionally titles could be inherited and pass from father to son. In the second place, the greeting formulae at the beginning of letters that invoke the blessing of gods for the addressee, which start to appear shortly before 1800 BCE. They usually invoke two gods, the second of which in a number of cases can be identified as the personal or family god of the addressee, whose identity was apparently known to the writer. In addition, there are scattered references, mostly in letters, to the god of particular person –“my god”, “his god”, “the god of my (etc.) father”. They will not be discussed here,²³ but they confirm the notion that each Babylonian had his family god, as is clearly expressed in later ritual and literary texts, such as the *din gir. šà . d a b . b a* prayers, which have OB precursors.²⁴

2.1. Anonymity and identification (“your god”)²⁵

While the evidence from the seal inscriptions is fairly straightforward,²⁶ that from the greeting formulae is complex. In a small number of letters, the second god is called “your god”, and usually in late Old Babylonian letters also “your creator” (*bānūka*) or “who created you” (*ša ibnūka*) is added to his name. *Family Religion* (70 and 74-75) mention seven cases where the name or a qualification of the god is provided with a possessive suffix, once “the god of my father” (9, 141:1¹, in a letter addressed to that god), once “your god” (*ilka*), twice “the god of your husband” (*il bēliki*);²⁷ twice “your creator” (*bānika*), and once (*Family Religion* 75, note 52) a father donates his daughter to “his god”, who is later called “her god”. Only in the last three cases the name of the god –Amurru, Ilabrat and Adad– is mentioned. Additional examples are 9, 1:5-6, where two writers invoke the blessing of “Inanna, Šamaš, Iggalla and Amurru, your god (*ilka*)”, and 9, 38:2, addressed to a man “whom his god Amurru and Marduk have kept in good health”, where the order of the gods is remarkable.

There are several additional examples of a blessing by an anonymous “your god”, who always follows Šamaš²⁸ and in a few cases his name is mentioned: in 2, 136:5 and 10, 197:8 it is Adad; in 9, 1:5 Amurru (after

21. The references to letters edited in *AbB* in § 2 omit this abbreviation and give only the number of the volume. I am grateful to Marten Stol who provided me with several useful references to texts and literature. I do not discuss the evidence contained in personal names with the element *-il/ilak* (see for such names in Mari, Durand 2008: 188, 8).

22. See for the archaeological evidence of the presence of domestic cultic installations for the veneration of both the family god and the deceased ancestors, linked with the contemporary burial customs (noted in *Family Religion*, 58-62, “Where the Ancestors Sleep”), the recent article by S. Tricoli, The Old Babylonian Family Cult and its Projection on the Ground: a Cross-Disciplinary Investigation, in *CRRAI* 55, 43-68.

23. I only mention here that the OB extispicy recorded in VAT 6678 (see U. Koch-Westenholz, in C. Wunsch (ed.), *Mining the Archives* (Dresden 2002: 134, no. 5) was performed “for the well-being of Bēltani (on a sheep offered) to the god of her father” (ref. M. Stol).

24. See above note 2 and for the forerunners, P. Michalowski, On the Early History of the Eršahunga Prayer, *JCS* 39: 114-120.

25. References to an anonymous “god” (*ilum*) who did, said or might do something of course defy interpretation, unless the archival or family context is very clear.

26. Not in all cases, e.g. not when the inscription on the seal only mentions *İR (ša) ilišu*, as noted by D. Charpin in *RA* 111: 175, ad 2.2.

27. Also in *OBTR* 116:4, a letter to queen Iltani in Qaṭṭara, whose writer invokes for her the blessing by *Geštinanna u DINGIR be-li-ki*¹ (see for the greeting formulae in the letters to Iltani below § 2.6). “The god of your lord” (DINGIR *bēliki*), mentioned after Šamaš in 12, 129:3, written by a woman, could also mean the god of her husband, but “the oath by Šubula, the god of his lord” in 6, 189:20-21 refers to the superior of a man.

28. 1, 18:9; 2, 142:4; 5, 227:4 (*il-[k]a*); 6, 8:4 and 30:4; 12, 38:3 and 112:4. In 7, 165:5, “your god, your creator” (*ilka bānūka*), is also anonymous. This is also the case in the appeal “Do a favor to the god and to Šamaš!” (*ilam u Šamaš gimil*) in 2, 87:16-17; 9, 184:26 and 12, 59:29, with additional and similar requests mentioned in *JCS* 30 (1978) 188, note 5 (add *JCS* 14 [1960] 55 no. 91:26, and from Mari ARMT 26/1, 80:2'-3'). Here “the god” could well be the “family god”, but there are also a

three gods); in 7, 7:3, Sumuqan. Correspondents who knew each other well did not have to do identify “your god”, which makes it difficult for us, because he needs not be the “family god” and could be the god of the town of the addressee.²⁹ Variations in the blessings also complicate the matter.³⁰ The writer of 12, 38:3 invokes the blessing of “Šamaš and your god”, but he and also others in 12, 39-49 that of Šamaš and Marduk, a blessing the addressee himself also uses in 12, 50. If Marduk is here identical to “your god”, this was probably a reference to the god of the city of the addressee who lived in Babylon, because a great “national god” does not normally feature as family god. It also difficult to distinguish a family god from the local or national god,³¹ but occasionally there is a clue, e.g. in the letters addressed to Nabium-atpalam, 12, 10-29. Many persons writing to him invoke a blessing by Šamaš and Marduk (as he does himself in 12, 30), but in four letters he is addressed as “Nabium-atpalam, whom Marduk keeps in good health”, which suggests a special link between him and the god Marduk.³² A particular case are letters from “religious women” (mainly *nadiātum*), who usually invoke the blessings of the the gods in whose service they are, usually referring to them as “my Lord and my Lady” (*bēlī u bēlī*), but occasionally they mention them by name, e.g. Šamaš and Aya in Sippir, and Marduk and Zarpanitum in Babylon (see also below, § 2.5).

2.2. The god as man’s creator (*ilum bānika, ša ibnūka*)

While the occurrences of “your god” are fairly rare, the qualification “your creator” (*bāni/uka*♦) or “who created you” (*ša ibnūka*♦), of which *Family Religion* 71 gives two examples, are more numerous. The qualification can be added to an anonymous god, as in 7, 165:5: “your god, your creator♦ (should plead for you before Šamaš and Marduk)”; 14, 91:2: “whom his god *bānišu* give a never-failing guardian angel”. But also regularly to a named god: 1, 46:3: Šamaš and Ilabrat♦; 105:2 and *OLA* 13, 35:1: Marduk♦, adding “who loves you” (*rā'imka*); 2, 86:14: Marduk♦; 3, 22:8: ^dAN.MAR.TU; 9, 182:1: “my lord Nabium♦”; 9, 132:4 and 10, 174:4: Ilabrat♦; 10, 47:3: Šamaš, Marduk and Bēl-Šarbi♦; 12, 161, 4-5, Amurru♦; *UET* 5, 82:4: [DN] *ilu[m]*♦; Boyer, *HE* 119:3: Šamaš, Marduk and Ašnan♦; *VS* 22, 83:4: Šamaš, Marduk, Inana and Nanāya♦ (*ša ib[nūka]*); the verb is probably in the singular, referring to the last goddess). The writer of 11, 119:28-30 urges his addressee “to enter Babylon, where the shining faces of Marduk, who loves you, and of Adad, your creator♦, may welcome you”. Occasionally two gods are invoked, one qualified as the creator, the other as the protector. The writer of NBC 6762 (unpubl.):4-5, utters the wish that “Damu, your creator♦ and Nuska, the protector of your life” (*nāšir napištika*) grant health to his addressee (Ellil-mudammīq, presumably from Nippur).

Gods of course also figure as “creators” of kings (see below § 2.7) and in 13, 53:7-8 Rim-Sîn II speaks of “Keš, the city of her who created me” (*al bāntia*), presumably meaning the local goddess Ninmah. The writer of 2, 111:34-36 says to the king: “Marduk, who loves you, truly created you to administer justice” (*ana šutēšurim ina kittim ibnika*). This needs not be the family or dynastic god of the king, because the ideology claimed that a king was born or created by the city god or national god, in this case Marduk. But below (§ 2.7) we will meet cases where the “personal god” of a king (called *il rēšia/qaqqadia*), who created him, is distinguished from the national god. This suggests that in private letters too the god who created a person is his personal or family god.

few cases where only one named god is mentioned, Marduk in 6, 104:11 and Pabilsag in 9, 240:14-15 (see Sallaberger 1999: 192).

29. In the letter ARM 10, 107:20-22 (cf. *MARI* 6: 578), Zibbatum, writing to “Abbā, my brother” (presumably Yasmah-Addu) utters the wish that “Dagan and your god, who stands with you, may come to your aid”. The second god is probably Itūr-Mēr, the patron deity of Mari, as suggested by ARM 10, 63:15-19, where Dam-hurāši in a letter to to Zimri-Lim wishes that “Dagan, lord of the funerary offerings, and Itūr-Mēr, king of Mari” may deliver his enemies into his hands (in 10, 62:14 she urges him “to come and to kiss the feet of his Lord Dagan and of Itūr-Mēr”).

30. Most of the eight letters addressed to Sîn-eribam by Awīl-ilim (12, 51-58) invoke the blessing of Šamaš and Marduk, but three times only Šamaš is mentioned.

31. Note also Eidem (2011: 128:21-22), where a man writes to his lord (the king), “May your god be a third party (to mediate) between us!” (*DINGIR-ka ina birini lū šalšum*). “Your god” –assuming that the logogram DINGIR may also refer to a goddess– probably is “the Lady of Apum” (*Bēlet Apim*), the god of his city, who is often invoked to bless the ruler, and not the latter’s personal or dynastic god.

32. When in 1, 119:11-13 the writer promises to pray for the addressee “before Šamaš and Marduk and my lord Bunene”, the last god may not have been his personal god, but the god of the temple to which he was attached.

2.3. The god as man's protector (*ilum nāširka*), who intercedes for him

We have more than a hundred references where the greeting formula mentions “the god, your protector” (*ilum nāširka*).³³ This usually happens after invoking the blessing of one or two named gods (often Šamaš and Marduk), in two formulations, in which the god's name is never given: “May the god, your protector, have no needs” (*šibūtam aj irši*), and “May the god, your protector, provide you with what is good” (*rēška ana damiqtim likīl*). The first formulation is remarkable, for it is the task of the person whom the god protects to meet the latter's needs, presumably in a domestic cult or in a local chapel. The wish implies that his client is able to do so and thus fares well, which makes these words an indirect wish for the well-being of the addressee of the letter. The anonymity of “the god, your protector” is a problem, but it is unlikely that this was an undefined minor deity, who acted as a kind of guardian angel. Sallaberger (1996, § 4.2.3) agrees with *Family Religion* (98-99) that this must be the personal/family god. According to him, the occasional wish that such a god may give the addressee a “guardian angel” (*lamassum*) indicates that the family god was not a “minor god”, since he could assign lower-ranking ghosts to his protégé.³⁴ A special case is 12, 36, which phrases the wish that “Šamaš, whom you serve may not fail to protect you”. I also mention here 5, 159:17', an emotional letter, that asks for the addressee the blessing of Ilabrat and Ninsianna and ends the plea for help with the words “Ilabrat, who grants life, is the one who favors me!” (*Ilabrat ša uballaṭu māgīr*).

Some greeting formulas also express the wish or conviction that the addressee's god will pray (*karābu*) or intercede for the addressee with a “great god”, a service usually expected from “minor gods” or spouses of great gods.³⁵ This purpose is also served by the wish for “a guardian angel, who secures that what you say (pray) is promptly heard”, scil. by the great god(s) (*lamassi qābê u magārim*, 1, 61:7 and 13, 64:2-3) and by the wish that the addressee's “protective god (*ilum nāširka*) may always be present before the sun god Šamaš” (7, 106:8-9). In the letter 12, 99:2, addressed to the god Amurru, apparently the writer's family god,³⁶ this is expressed by the wish that “Amurru's utterance (obviously spoken on behalf of the writer) is heard before Šamaš”.³⁷ In a comparable letter to “the god of my father” (9, 141:8-10), the writer asks his family god, who is supposed “to look after my family, old and young”, “to write a letter to Marduk, who loves you, that he may break his bondage” (lines 14-15). The personal or family god is asked to do the same as a man's friends, patrons and supporters are supposed to do for him at court or in confrontations with a superior, when he fears injustice or has ran into problems.

33. In a number of cases we have “the god who protects my father” (*ilum nāšir abia*) and there are a few more explicit designations, such as in A 3522:9 (quoted in CAD N/II, 39, 7, a, 1', a'), *ilum nāšir napišti šāpīria*, “the god who protects the life of my governor”; NBC 6762:5 (quoted above). 8, 148:5-6, contains the wish that “Marduk, who has appointed(?) you (*zākir [šumika]*), may not fail to protect you”.

34. Note 14:91, a letter addressed to “My father, whom the god, his creator, gave a never failing guardian angel”, and 1, 61 and 13, 74, quoted in the next paragraph. We also have cases where the god invoked is designated as *rā'imka*, “who loves you”, in most cases added to the name of Marduk (but Šamaš in 11, 128:1 and 13:144:5, *rā'im bēlia*). This is probably not because Marduk was the family god of the addressee –unlikely for the national god– but because the addressee had an important political function, which must be due to Marduk's favour (cf. the previous note).

35. See for this aspect *Family Religion*, 80-81. See also 1, 6:11-12, “your god, your guardian angel and [...] who prays for you” (*ša ikarrabakkum*).

36. He calls his god “my lord” and himself “his servant” and writes that the god “has created him among the people”.

37. 12, 99:1-3, *ana bēlia Amurru ša ina mahar Šamaš qibīssu šamât*. Note also 7, 165:5-7, with the wish that “your god, who created you, may every day enhance your reputation (*igarrīaka [li]dammiq*) before Šamaš and Marduk”, exactly the same words that occur in the epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi, XLVIII:52-58, where this is expected from the protective spirits, while XLIX:81-85 names the goddess Ninlil (the spouse of Enlil) “whose utterance carries weight in the Ekur” (the temple of her husband).

2.4. The local god, “the god of the/my (etc.) town/city” (*ili ālim/ālia*), “our god” (*ilum nûm*) and “the god of the house” (*ili bītum*)³⁸

The personal/family god cannot be simply identified with “the god of the/my/your city/town” (*ili ālim* etc.), who occurs ca. ten times. Four times (10, 178:4; 12, 186:12; 13, 140:4'-5'; *PRAK* II D 33:25, *ili ālia*) it is Marduk, the god of Babylon,³⁹ and twice Šamaš, the city god of Sippar (5, 239: 32-33; 8, 99:34). In 10, 71:22 we have an oath “by Šamaš, the god of us”, where the remarkable independent possessive pronoun (*nûm*) could mean “of our town”, but might also express a more personal relationship (“of our family”). This is probably the case in 10, 178:4-5, which distinguishes between “Marduk, the god of my town” and “Šamaš, the god of us” (*ilum nûm*). For us, the choice between town god or family god is often difficult.⁴⁰ An example is the god Bēl Šarbi, in 12, 63:29, called “the god of our town”. This god, whose cult center was Bāš,⁴¹ could be town god and family god at the same time, for the writer of 10, 47:3 invokes the blessing of “Šamaš, Marduk and Bēl-Šarbi, your creator” (*bānika*), where the last qualification suggests a personal relationship.⁴²

A distinction between the town god and the personal or family god is attested in two judicial records, both dealing with complications in the division of an inheritance. In CT 4, 9a:6, a division is reached “in the temple of the god of their town and of their god”, and in CT 8, 3a:24, a final clearance takes place “by means of the emblem of the god Ellil, in the ‘chapel’ of their god”.⁴³ It is very appropriate to solve conflicts between heirs in the presence of the family god, who in the first text seems to be located in the temple of the town god, and in the second to have his own shrine or chapel, which is called *ešertum*, also attested in the unpublished text CBS 1513, *bīt ešertim ša abišunu*.⁴⁴ “The god of the house” also occurs in 2, 116, probably written by a *nadītum* in Sippar,⁴⁵ who asks her addressee for lambs “so that one may provide my food offering in the temple of my Lady and in the temple of the god of the house”, while she herself sends flour so that one can “give them to eat”.⁴⁶ The identity of this “god of the house” remains unknown, but he/she apparently had his/her own shrine or cella, where sacrifices were made. This makes this god similar to the family god, who does not seem to enjoy a domestic cult, but must have been venerated in a local shrine, because, as observed in *Family Religion* 82, “topographical proximity” is a “usually decisive factor” for explaining the choice of a family god. “People want to worship a god within reach... [T]here is a fair degree of probability that the god in question had a temple or

38. There are a few more specific designations that cannot be discussed here, but I mention the letter BM 134536:16 (S. Dalley, *Iraq* 63 (2001) 161, whose writer swears *aššum i-li at-hi-i*, “by the god of those who are brothers!”), an expression which we might compare with OA *ilu ahhuttim*, “the gods of the brothers” (see below § 3.4, B1D, end).

39. 5, 178 (found in Nippur) has in lines 3'-4', “May the god of the town, Ištar and Marduk keep you well”, but to which town this refers is not clear.

40. An interesting case is AO 11127:9-10 (quoted in *AfO* 50 [2003/4] 377³⁹), where in a trial the judges “gave” a refugee from Isin, in the absence of proof for his claim, “for swearing the oath to his gods Šamaš and Gula” (*ana i-li-šu Š. u G. ana mamātim iddinū*). While Gula, a goddess of Isin, naturally qualifies as “his god”, the inclusion of Šamaš under that title is more surprising, but note that administrators of Isin in 11, 159 invoke the blessing of Šamaš and Gula for the judges of Nippur.

41. See for this god, J.-M. Durand, Lord of the Euphrates poplar, *NABU* 1987/99. His temple in Bāš was restored by Nebuchadnezzar II and the OB text BM 81468:2 mentions a priest of this god.

42. The god of the town also occurs in texts from Mari, e.g. in A.3568:5 and 18, where we have a blessing by [^dUTU? u ^dDa]-gan DINGIR *ālaka* and a girl is donated by her mother *ana* DINGIR *ālim*.

43. CT 4, 9a, 6, *ina bīt ili ālišunu u ilišunu* (pace *Family Religion* 110f.) *zittam izuzzū*; CT 8, 3a: 21-24, *ištu mimma maršit abišunu ina ŠU.NIR ^dEN.LÍL ina ešertim ša ilišunu... ubbibū*. See for these texts Stol (2003, 293-300).

44. See Stol (2004: 710, note 485), and *ibidem* on the god connected with the *é a d . d a . n a* at Nippur, where the oldest son and heir always acquired the (offering) table of the house cult (*banšur . za . gu . la*). See for *a/ešertum* CAD A/II, s.v. *ašertu* A, b, “sanctuary (...originally the cella)”; under 1' it refers to an Old Babylonian plan of a temple, a small room of which is designated as *ešertum*.

45. This text is also adduced in *Family Religion* 71. It can be connected with 7, 157 and perhaps 159, letters without address. The writer mentions in 2, 116:8 *bīt bēltia*, “the temple of my Lady” (probably the goddess Aya), and in 7, 157:20 asks to send goods to the *gagūm*.

46. Lines 8-11, *ina É bēltia u É i-li É/ŠUKU-ti liškunu*¹⁰ 0.0.3 ZÍD.DA *uštābilam/É bēltia u É DINGIR É lišakilū*. “My lady” obviously is the goddess Aya, whom the *nadītum* serves. “Providing food offerings” (*kurummatam šakānum*) occurs more often in OB letters and several times they are said to accompany prayers (see the references in CAD K, 579, c, 1').

shrine in the neighborhood”. A link with a temple is also attested in PBS 8, 82:2, where a man in Nippur has to swear an oath “in the temple of Amurru, his god”.⁴⁷

This means, as shown in *Family Religion*, that the family god is different from “the god of the house”, “the house god”, who is “a protective spirit of a private house [...] similar to the *lamassu*”. He is a figure of the “domestic religion... not to be confused with the gods of the Mesopotamian family religion”.⁴⁸ This implies, although the distinction between “family god” and “house god” is not always very clear,⁴⁹ that there is no need to deal with the latter here.

2.5. Prayers to the god (*karābum*)

A final piece of evidence is that authors of letters write that they will pray or have prayed for the addressee before (*mahar*) one or more gods.⁵⁰ This is expressed by the verb *karābum* with personal dative, in the present-future (stating a fact or a promise), in the precative (“I will...”) and occasionally also in the past tense (e.g. 1, 128:13, cf. 9, 129:10). The promise to do so not infrequently uses the iterative stem to stress that it is not a single act.⁵¹ It is meant to create goodwill or to render thanks for a favor and it does occur immediately after a request.⁵² Again, such prayers in most cases are (to be) made before Šamaš and/or Marduk, who are also most often invoked to bless the addressee of a letter. This makes sense, because invoking the favor of these great, “national” gods must have been considered to be more effective for the addressee than the favor of the writer’s personal or family god.⁵³ Women who write that they will pray for their addressee “before my Lord and my Lady” are usually women devoted to these gods (*nadītum*) in Babylon, Sippar or Nippur, who occasionally designate themselves as “your *kāribtum*”; cf. CAD K 216, 1.b.⁵⁴ In a few cases other gods are (also) mentioned, in 13, 85:26, Annunītum after Šamaš and Marduk, in 2, 82:30-31, Marduk and Sîn-Amurru, “who bless my father”, in 11, 120:10-12 a prayer, accompanied by a food offering, is addressed to Sîn, the moon god, called “the one who loves you”. When 13, 164, a remarkable letter written to the goddess Ninmug, states that her divine husband,

47. *ina* É^dMAR.TU DINGIR.RA.NI, where the use of Sumerian in an otherwise Akkadian text is remarkable. Kraus (JCS 3: 145²⁸) assumes that the man was a priest or temple official. See for the (modest) temple of Amurru in Nippur, to which also a singer was connected, Richter (1999: 117-119).

48. The “gods of the house” (DINGIR.MEŠ ša É-ti) are well attested in later texts from Nuzi, Emar and Ekalte; see *Family Religion* 73-77 and W. Sallaberger, Zu einer Urkunde über die Rückgabe der Hausgötter, *UF* 33: 495-500. The record from Ekalte, edited by Sallaberger, documents that, when in consequence of an adoption the paternal house had come into other hands, the house gods had to return to the male heirs of the deceased *pater familias*, who had to invoke, honor and take care of them in a funerary cult.

49. Confusing is that both the “house god” and the “family god” could be venerated in an *ešertum*, but this word may designate both a “house chapel” (from which the “house god” disappears when the house is destroyed, *Family Religion* 72) and a chapel in a temple (see note 44 and CT 8, 3a:24, quoted above).

50. See for this feature also Sallaberger (199 § 6.3.2.7). “Segen der Gottheit”.

51. In OBTI 2:3-5 the priest Abizum introduces himself as “the one who constantly prays for you before Kītūm”. Occasionally other specifications are added, such as “every day”, “by day and by night”, “at the morning and evening offering”, cf. 2, 89:9; 7, 28:14-16; 10, 131:4-6; 11, 106:8; 13:96:8.

52. The writer of ARM 10, 92 promises the king that if he gives her her nursemaid she will pray for him before Tešub and Hepat. There are various other ways in which praying for somebody is expressed in letters. We meet the assurance that “people who see me” (*āmerū’a*) will pray for the addressee before the gods (11, 78:20-21; 13, 85:25-27) and the belief that “Marduk and Sîn-Amurru pray for my father” (2, 82:30-31). The conviction or wish that Marduk will bless (also *karābum*!) the addressee is found in 6, 1:35, to which 2, 81:23-24 and 9, 174:3-5 add “for what you are doing”.

53. We of course also meet other gods, known as the main gods of particular cities, such as Ba’u and Ninigirsu in Lagash (12, 180:4-5); Ellil and Ninurta in Nippur (several times in *AbB* 11); Sîn and Ningal in Ur (11, 182; 12, 186); Ištar and Zababa (9, 43) in Kish; Ištar and Nanaya, “your mistresses” (12, 178:3) in Uruk; Šamaš and Gula (11, 159) in Isin; Ištar and Tašmētum (7, 129:6-8’ and 12, 60:4-5) in Assur, etc.

54. 1, 61:3-5 (*kāribtaka*); 2, 150; 3, 7, 8 and 20; 10, 6; 11, 105 and 106 (in 1.9’ “before the Queen of Sippar”); 12, 1, 78, 81 and 117; 13, 96 (*kāribtaka*); OBTI 1, 11; OBTR 133. In 2, 89:9 such a lady promises daily prayers in Esagila, Marduk’s temple in Babylon, and in 11:60:25-28 one promises to pray “with pure (lit ‘washed’) hands”. See for the prayers by the *nadītum* of Marduk in Babylon, L. Barberon, *Les religieuses et le culte de Marduk dans la royauté de Babylone* (Archibab 1 = Mémoires de NABU 14; Paris 2012) 204-207. Note also in 12, 180:4, *bīt* Ba’u u *bīt* Ningirsu *akarabakkum*.

the god Išum, “will listen to what you say”, this is an indirect request to intercede for the addressee. Some of the gods mentioned in these letters may well have been “family gods”, but this is difficult to prove.

2.6. Difficult choices

When the qualifications and statements discussed above are missing, it is difficult to prove that the second god of a greeting formula was the family god of the addressee, unless a letter is part of an archive, which acquaints us with the persons involved, so that we know from where they wrote and which god was their national or city god. This applies e.g. to the letters from Tell Harmal, published by A. Goetze in *Sumer* 14 (1958), where we have a few times a blessing by Šamaš and Tišpak, comparable to blessings in Babylonia by the “universal god” Šamaš who figures alongside a great variety of other gods, who can be local gods or “family gods”.⁵⁵ When more than two gods are invoked, identifications are even more difficult.⁵⁶ We are somewhat helped by the existence of a pattern, noted in *Family Religion* 70, whereby the first god mentioned usually is a “great” or “universal” god (e.g. the national god Marduk or the sun god Šamaš) and the observance of a “traditional order” that “goes from the general (‘Šamaš’) to the particular (‘your god’),”⁵⁷ although Van der Toorn admits that the greeting formulae also “offer room for a personal touch”. The “reference to the personal god of the recipient is not omnipresent”, and there are cases where the second or last god mentioned can be the god of the writer, as I mentioned above. An interesting case is the unpubl. letter NBC 6277:1-5, addressed to “the gentleman whom Gula and Marduk keep in good health”, followed by “may Šamaš and Gula keep you forever in good health!”, where Gula could be the personal god of the addressee or, if he lived in Isin, the god of his city, and where also the blessing by the “great gods” Marduk and Šamaš is mentioned. Sallberger (1996, Ch. 4), who observes that the form and content of the greeting formulae must have been conditioned by the relations between writer and addressee and their mutual appreciation, adds: “Zu den Variationsmöglichkeiten rechne ich auch die Wahl der angerufenen Götter, die vom lokalhistorischen Kontext und der Stellung (eines) der Briefpartner bestimmt wird.” But he does not go into details and for the relation between writer/addressee and the gods he refers to Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit* (102-126), and *Family Religion*, whose conclusions must have convinced him.

How difficult it is to identify a family god, even in a carefully excavated and published archive, is clear from the blessing formulae used in the letters of Iltani, the wife of the ruler of Qaṭṭara (Tell al-Rimah), published and studied by S. Dalley.⁵⁸ In letters to her several times the blessing by Adad/Addu and Geštinanna is invoked. While it is clear that Adad/Addu was the main local god (with a temple) and the god of her husband (cf. 116: 5, *Geštinanna u DINGIR bēliki*, “G. and the god of your husband”; see above note 27), the position of Geštinanna remains unclear. Was she the personal goddess of Iltani? Her seal impression (OBTR 253 no. 13), which identifies her as the wife of Aqba-hammu, does not mention a relation to a deity and neither Dalley nor Schwemer⁵⁹ have been able to solve the problem. The uncertainty is in part due to the fact that different writers

55. Note the occurrences of Ašnan, quoted above, and a blessing by Šamaš and Ulmaššitum for “our father”, in A. Al-Zeebari, *Altbabylonische Briefe des Iraq-Museums* (Baghdad 1964) no. 22:4. But the same writer in no. 28:4 invokes a blessing of Šamaš and “the great gods”. A blessing by Šamaš and Ašnan is invoked in 9, 112 and 134 and in 12, 78, all three letters of the trader Šep-Sîn. Ilabrat, who is regularly invoked after Šamaš in the blessing formula in the correspondence between Šamaš-hāzir and his wife Zinû (4, 140 and 156; 14, 162-166) probably is their family god, but note in 11, 171 a blessing for Zinû by Mārat-ūmi and Ilabrat, and in 178 one by Ištar and Šamaš.

56. E.g. 9, 1:5-6, blessing by An-Inana, Šamaš, Iggalla and Amurru, your god (*ilka*), which points to Uruk; Šamaš, Sîn and Ningal-anna in YOS 15, 62:4; Ištar, Amurru, Sîn and Išar-kidisu in *OBTR* 18:12-15; Šamaš, Ea and Marduk in Al-Rawi – Dalley, *Édub.ba.a* 7, no. 77; Ellil, Ninurta and Enki in 11, 27; Šamaš, Ištar², Ea and Damgalnunna in Boyer HE 106:4; Aššur, Šamaš and Marduk, in 11, 49 (a letter by Aššur-asu).

57. Uncertainties remain. D.O. Edzard in *OBO* (160/4, 594-595) raised the question whether the god, whose servant a man calls himself in his seal inscription, is identical to the anonymous god (*ilum*, “the god”, *ilr*, “my god”) which may figure in his name and whether the god who introduces a praying man to a high god in a scene frequently depicted on cylinder seals is his personal god. Note in this connection 5, 39 (see *Family Religion* 74, with note 39), where a woman, in connection with a dispute about the inheritance, writes to her brother Ibbi-Ilabrat: “May Ilabrat, the god of your father, pass a verdict in my and your affair”, where the god of his father is part of the man’s name.

58. Edition in *OBTR* ch. II, study in Old Babylonian Greetings Formulae and the Iltani Archive from Rimah, *JCS* 25: 79-88.

59. Schwemer (2001: 268-269). His proposal to read in 119:5-6, *Addu u Geštinanna i-li [l-ta]-ni... qaqqadki likabbittū*, would qualify Addu and Geštinanna together as “the gods of Iltani”. But the reading *[l-ta]-ni* is difficult, and if this was meant,

of letters to Iltani use different blessing formulae (her sister in Assur blesses her by her own god Aššur, her sister who is *nadittum* in Sippir invokes the blessing of “my Lord and my Lady”, Šamaš and Aya) and to the lack of letters by Iltani herself, which could acquaint us with the greeting formula she herself uses.⁶⁰

Many gods of course must have been venerated as family gods, but with scattered texts from illicit diggings the evidence is elusive. Stol (2003) mentions two interesting cases where he could identify a family god. From CT 4, 9a (see above note 43), where two brothers fighting about an inheritance have names with the god Erra, he deduces the existence of “ein Familienkult um den Gott Erra”. And PBS 8/2, 230, where two brothers bear the names Ilān-dannā and Šullat-nāšir, probably implies a family cult of these twin gods (*ilān*), Šullat and Haniš.⁶¹

2.7. The gods of kings in the early Old Babylonian period, an “Amorrite” heritage?

As Van der Toorn points out,⁶² family gods are already attested in the third millennium BC, where we have almost no evidence on private persons, but inscriptions show that the rulers of the dynasty of Ur-Nanše of early Lagash venerated as such the god Šulutul, who is different from the main gods of the city-state.⁶³ The curse in some Old Akkadian royal inscriptions, that who tampers with the inscription “may not stand before his god” (*mahriš ilišu ale GUB*) must also refer to his personal or dynastic god. This pattern is also attested for the early second millennium, where rulers, as pointed out recently by Charpin,⁶⁴ distinguish between the god of their city, the “national” god who is also the protector of the dynasty, and their personal god, called “the god of my person” (lit. “of my head”, *ili rēšia*), “the god who created me”. The equivalent used by a ruler of Alalakh in the 15th century BCE, *ilu ša qaqqadia*, quoted by Van der Toorn, in fact has a precursor, for Kudur-mabuk already calls Nergal *ilum bāni qaqqadia* (*RIME* 4, 268:45), in which he is followed by his son Rim-Sîn (*RIME* 4, 283:31-32, *dingir sag.du.ga.na*). Lipit-Ištar of Isin regularly calls himself “the favorite of the goddess Inana”, speaks of *Inana sag.du.ga.ma.tu mu*, “my personal goddess, the mother who gave birth to me”. Ipiq-Adad II of Eshnunna (19th century BCE) uses the same words in designating Amurrum as his personal god (*dingir sag.du.m[u]*) and helper (*á.dah*),⁶⁵ which is also the case with Abdi-Erah, probably from Tutub, in the same general area.⁶⁶ The Old Assyrian king also has a personal god, called Bēlum, to be distinguished from the “national” god Aššur (see below § 3.4, B2, 5a and C3).

one would expect *i-lu-ki*, “your gods”. Interesting is letter 118, whose writer tells Iltani that he rejoiced when he heard that “the god (DINGIR) has mentioned your name” and continues with “the god who knows your paternal house (DINGIR *ša É abiki idū*) has honored you!”. It was probably written at the time Iltani became queen, which the writer sees as proof of the favor of her family god, i.e. the god of her paternal home. If so, it has no bearing on her situation in Qaṭṭarā, where as wife of the local ruler she would probably share his family god.

60. After this was written I could take notice of A.-I. Langlois, *Les archives de la princesse Iltani découvertes à Tell Al-Rimah (XVIII^e siècle av. J.-C.)*, vols. 1 et 2 (ARCHIBAB 2, Mémoires de NABU 18; Paris 2017). In vol. 2, ch. 1.4.1.4.1, she deals in detail with this complicated issue. On the basis of OBTR 117 (where she reads/restores “ton [dieu], le génie protecteur ([DINGIR]-*ki* LAMA) (et) Geštinanna”) and of 119 (where she reads “Addu et Geštinanna, nos génies protecteurs-*šēdum*”) she suggests on p. 22 that Addu and Geštinanna were Iltani’s “divinités personnelles protectrices”. On p. 21 she mentions that, in text 122, Iltani’s sister in Assur invokes for her the blessing of “Aššur et ton dieu protecteur-*kāribum*” (*ka-ri-ib-ki*). But since there are no other cases where a pair of gods figures as family god, a person’s protective deity (OB *ilum nāširka*) was not necessarily identical to the family god.

61. He also mentions CT 6, 36a, where a certain Nūr-ilišu in Sippar “built a shrine (É) for his gods” (*ana i-li-šu ṭpuš*), Šullat and Haniš.

62. *Family Religion* 74 and 76-77.

63. See G. Selz, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des altsumerischen Stadtstaates von Lagaš* (Philadelphia 1995) 279-282. He appears as *dingir-lugal* and in statements as “RN *dingir. ra.ni Š.*”. Several times Š. is asked to intercede and pray for a ruler in the temple with a main god, which implies that statues of him were present there. See for Ebla now A. Archi, *Cult of Ancestors and Funerary Practices at Ebla*, in P. Pfälzner et al. (eds.), *(Re)constructing Funerary Rituals in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden 2012) 5-31, § 2. “The God of the king, the God of the father, the God of the Queen”.

64. D. Charpin, *Les inscriptions royales paléo-babyloniennes*, *RA* 100: 131-160, esp. 156-157.

65. See *RIME* 4, 689, no. 1001 (rather to be assigned to Ipiq-Adad than to Sîn-abušu).

66. He mentions in a year-name (*OIP* 43 no. 96) that he had made a statue of “Amurrum, the god who guides/leads him” (*dMAR.TU i-lí-re-di-šu*), which I assume to refer to the same reality. That gods, and presumably especially personal gods, guide men is also expressed in a letter from Shemshara (J. Eidem and J. Laessøe, *The Shemshara Archives*, 1 [Copenhagen 2001],

The god mentioned by kings as their personal god must be the family god, the god of the ruling dynasty. This is clear from Yamhad, where both king Yarim-Lim and his sons venerate the moon god Sîn as such.⁶⁷ In Babylon both Hammurabi and his son Samsu-iluna also mention Sîn as their creator,⁶⁸ as does Šamši-Adad I in his inscription from the temple of Aššur/Enlil in Assur (*RIMA* 1, 51:132, DINGIR *rēšia*). The dynastic god is also meant when the writer of A.4182:10-11 (*Flor. mar.* 6 [2002] 195) states that Zimri-Lim has been placed on the throne of his father by “the god of his father”.⁶⁹ The kings of Isin of the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, who of course venerate the supreme god Enlil of Nippur, have as their own god Dagan, probably because the founder of their dynasty, Išbi-Erra, called “a man of Mari”, originated from the area of the Middle Euphrates, where the cult of Dagan, the “Lord of the land”, was very important. In a letter in which he states his claim to the throne, Išbi-Erra mentions that he swore an oath “by Enlil, my lord, and by Dagan, my god” (m u ^dDa - g a n d i n g i r - m à ì - p à d). The names of two later kings (Iddin-Dagan and Išme-Dagan) also mention him and the latter in a hymn designates himself as “son of Dagan”. A still later ruler, Urdukuga, built a temple for “Dagan, his god”.⁷⁰ In Larsa, both Nūr-Adad (“called by a good name by Iškur”) and his son Sîn-idinam (*RIME* 4, 178:44) mention Iškur/Adad as their personal god, but Kudur-mabuk and his sons Warad-Sîn and Rīm-Sîn, a new dynasty, in their inscriptions call the god Nergal (also the god of Maškan-šapir) their personal, dynastic god (*RIME* 4, 268:44-45, *ilum bāni qaqqadia*; 277:21-22, d i n g i r s a g . d u . g a . n a), which is also expressed by the personal name Rim-Sîn-Nergal-lamassašu.

The association between a king and a dynasty with a particular god had historical roots and must have originated in the area where the god in question was prominent, as suggested by the role played by Dagan as the god of Išbi-Erra. This example also shows that the link was maintained when the dynasty moved to another area, *in casu* the city of Isin. But a son did not always have (keep) the same god as his father, for Šamši-Adad, who called Sîn his creator, in a letter to his son Yasmah-Addu (ARMT 26 no.108:6-7) calls Adad/Addu the latter’s personal god ([DIN]GIR *ša r[e-ši-šu]*).⁷¹ Was it because his son was born or raised in the city of Ekallātum, where Addu was the main god? Daduša, king of Eshnunna (ca. 1800 BCE), in his victory stele repeatedly also refers to the god Adad as “my god”, while his father Ipiq-Adad II mentioned as such the god Amurru. Official statements by kings on their gods could apparently vary, presumably adapted to the political or religious realities they faced. In the Prologue of his laws, Hammurabi, who called Sîn his god, boasts of his conquest of the Euphrates valley “at the oracular command of Dagan, his creator” (*ittum Dagan bānišu*). He could not have triumphed if the main god of that area had not authorized him and he felt obliged to acknowledge this by calling him his creator. Rim-Sin II, in his letter AbB 13, 53:7-8, calls Keš, whose goddess was ^dN i n . m a h, the city of “her who created me” (*bānitia*).

no. 3:12), where Šamši-Adad I encourages Kuwari to catch an enemy with the words: *ilum lirdika šabassu!* The wish that gods may guide men is also expressed in OA (see below § 3.4, A1, 5f and B1d, end).

67. Noted in *Family Religion*, 76⁵⁴ and 77⁶³ (referring to ARM 10, 156:10-11 = A.4366, *Flor. mar.* 7 (2002) 9-10), where one writes to his son Hammurabi: “By Addu, the lord of Halab and by the god of your father!” (*aššum ^dAddu bēl Hal[ab⁶]/ū DINGIR-lim ša abik[a]*). In A.1314:27-28, a letter to Yašub-Yahad (*Syria*, 33: 66), Yarim-Lim himself distinguishes between “Addu, the god of my city” and “Sîn, my personal god” (*Sîn ili rēšia*). Charpin (2004: 377) mentions the inscription on the seal of Sūmī-rapa, another son of Yarim-Lim (*RIME* 4, 804): “Addu, who proclaimed my name, Sîn who loves my rule” (*rā'im pālia*). The importance of the moon god in northern Mesopotamia and Syria is confirmed by ARM 26 no. 24:12, where various rulers make an alliance in his temple in Harrān.

68. Hammurabi calls himself in the prologue of his laws (II:13-15) “royal seed, whom the god Sîn created” (*ša Sîn ibnišu*) and in the epilogue (col. L:41-43) invokes the curse of “Sîn, lord of heaven, my creator” (*ilum bāni*). Samsu-iluna mentions (*RIME* 4, 381:39) that he restored the fortress Lagaba “for Sîn, the god who created me” (DINGIR *bānia*).

69. But when Zimri-Lim’s daughter Kirū in ARMT 10, 113:21-22 expresses the wish to come to Mari “in order to bring a sacrifice to the gods of my father” (*ana DINGIR.MEŠ ša abia*), she could simply mean the gods of the city (such as Itūr-Mer and others); Durand assumes that she wants to participate “aux cultes ancestraux chez son père”.

70. See F. A. Ali, *Sumerian Letters* (Univ. Microfilms 1964) A 3:16. See for Dagan in Isin, *AfO* 24: 48:35-36, and now Richter 1999, 193-196.

71. He must be meant in ARMT 10, 107:20, where Yasmah-Addu’s sister wishes him the help of “Dagan and your god, who supports you (*Dagan u ilka ša ittika izzazzū*). Note that the widow of Yahdun-Lim in ARMT 10, 1:12-14 wishes that “Ištarat[?], your mother, your goddess (*i-[la-at-ka]*), may give you reign and throne”. This goddess was perhaps at home in Ekallātum and thus Yasmah-Addu’s goddess before he became king of Mari (cf. Durand in *MARI* 4: 387¹⁴ and *LAPO* 18, no. 1216, b).

It is interesting to note that kings from different cities and dynasties can have the same family or dynastic god, Amurru in Eshnunna and Tutub, and Sîn in Syria, Northern Mesopotamia and Babylon, Adad in Larsa, Eshnunna (Daduša) and perhaps Ekallātum. Van der Toorn dealt with this feature in *Family Religion* 88-93 under the heading “Amorite Family Gods”, where he refers to “the Amorite ruler Samsī-Addu”. He observes that “Amorite religion is rooted in the tradition of pastoral nomadism” and that “[t]he social constraints that commended their devotion allowed them to choose from a small group of deities whom they traditionally considered as their native gods. Their gods were not themselves migratory, as their worshippers were, but had their own fixed sanctuaries... They were to be found, for the most part, in the areas which the Amorites considered the traditional land of their ancestors.” He considers the veneration of Sîn by the above-mentioned kings “characteristically Amorite” and, following Yuhong and Dalley,⁷² finds additional proof of it in the occurrences of Sîn in the year-names of early Babylonian kings and in the association of these kings with oaths sworn by Sîn and Marduk (in that order).⁷³ Sîn, according to Van der Toorn, here would be Sîn-Amurru, the “Amorite moon god”, whose traditional cult centre was in the city of Harrān.⁷⁴ That, as mentioned above, two other early rulers in the Diyala area (from Eshnunna and Tutub) considered Amurru their family or dynastic god, could fit this picture, for we know that the Amorite element was from the beginning strong in that region.⁷⁵ Van der Toorn assumes that Amurru or El-Amurru (^dan.mar.tu) was the Amorite variant of the West-Semitic god El, and notes that Sîn and Amurru are often jointly mentioned in seal inscriptions.

Evidence for the origin of this interesting feature is unfortunately very restricted, due to a lack of texts from its formative period, before ca. 1850 BC., and the claim that we have to do with a “characteristically Amorite” feature is not without problems.⁷⁶ Dagan as dynastic god of the early kings of Isin has historical roots in the west, in the area of the Middle Euphrates. But Daduša, a later king of Eshnunna (ca. 1800 BCE), in his victory stela repeatedly refers to the god Adad as “my god” (alongside the national god Tišpak) and thus no longer venerates Amurru as such.⁷⁷ This seems also to be the case with Šamsī-Adad’s son, Yasmah-Addu, ruler of Mari, since Ibāl-pī-El, presumably his diviner, in a letter to him designates not Sîn, but Adad/Addu as his personal god (*ilum ša rēšišu*).⁷⁸ Was this because he now ruled Mari, where (according to *Family Religion* 91) Adad/Addu of Aleppo was “a major god of the Sim’alite Amorites”, to which tribal confederation Yasmah-Addu’s successor Zimri-Lim also belonged? And was Daduša from a new dynasty that venerated the Adad as dynastic god? ⁷⁹

72. W. Yuhong & S. Dalley, The Origins of the Manana Dynasty at Kish, *Iraq* 52: 159-165.

73. Perhaps one should mention here also that in Eidem (2011) letter 43:9’ from Tell Leilan, Buriya of Andarig invokes “Sîn, the lord of Yamutbalum”, apparently the national or dynastic god, for the inscription on a seal of a servant (sic) calls the ruler of Andarig “Himdiya, appointed by/prefect of (*šakin*) Sîn, lord of Yamutbalum, king of Andarig” (p. 281 1; the scene on the seal shows a person standing before the enthroned god Sîn).

74. That in Old Babylonian seal inscriptions Amurru and Sîn often occur together might, according to Kupper (1961, 57f., 61 and 77f), be due to the fact that both were popular among nomads. *AbB* 2, 82:30-31 writes that Marduk and Sîn-Amurru, “pray for my father”, and in *AbB* 2, 82:10-12 a man writes to his father: “Since the day the god Sîn-Amurru pronounced your name”, which probably refers to his father’s appointment to an important position. Here Sîn may well be “the god who protects my father,” mentioned in the greeting, “who must provide what is good for my father”, and he could be the family god.

75. See R.M. Whiting, *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar* (AS 22; Chicago 1987) 26-29. He presents evidence for a close alliance between the ruling family of Eshnunna and the family of an Amorite of very high status (sealed by marriages).

76. A different feature is “the god of my lord” (the king; *ilum ša bēlia*) in texts from Mari, discussed by Durand (2008, 302), who qualifies it as “un trait de la religiosité d’époque amorrite”. This god is mentioned by servants of the crown as supporter and cause of success, and is occasionally invoked to act or hanked for his benevolence. Durand compares him with the *fortuna principis*, whose role A.L. Oppenheim long ago compared with that of Ištar in her relation to the king (*Ancient Mesopotamia* [Chicago 1964] 205).

77. See D. Charpin, *RA* 98: 151-162, esp. 161, 1.3.1.1. “Dāduša et les dieux”. In col. XIII:11-12, Daduša speaks of “Adad, the god who created me” (*ilim bānia*) and in XIV:2 of “the temple of Adad, the god who raised me” (*ilim murabbia*).

78. ARMT 26/I, 108:5-8, [*bē*]lī an[*a šarrū*]t (or perhaps *balāt*?) *šanātīm*^dD[*a-gan* ù ^dIM/[DIN]GIR *ša r[ēšišu]/[l]īpušūšū*, as restored by J.-M. Durand. In lines 12-13 he adds the wish that “the god of my lord may protect me” (DINGIR *ša bēlia liššuranni*); his successor, Zimri-Lim, has the title *šakin Dagan u Addu*. See for the veneration for Addu in Mari under Zimri-Lim, Schwemer (2001, 282-304).

79. In this connection also the seal of king Išhi-Addu of Qatna should be mentioned, published in *Akkadica* 127: 41-57. Its inscription, *lš-hi-IM/LUGAL ma-ta-tim*^dIM *i-il šum-šu*, as its editors point out, raises questions because of the meaning of l.

The appearance of Amurru, Sin, Dagan and Adad as dynastic gods and as proof of an Amorrite heritage brings us back to the above (§ 1.2) mentioned proposals of Alt and Lewy. Both of them advocated such a heritage, labelled “nomadic” or “Amorrite”, which would have survived sedentarization and urbanisation and might help to explain the literary tradition of “the god of the father” in the patriarchal narratives of the Old Testament and in the Old Assyrian society. Van der Toorn, in a way comparable to Alt’s use of Nabataean and Palmyranian inscriptions, compares texts of the later Safaitic nomads, which attest the worship of particular gods by their clans, celebrated at annual gatherings in their sanctuaries to express loyalty to their tradition and as a sign of solidarity.

To gain more insight into the feature of the “family god” and to evaluate the claim of an “Amorrite” origin we now have to look at the Old Assyrian evidence.

3. THE OLD ASSYRIAN EVIDENCE

3.1. Introduction

Irrespective of its social and historical origins,⁸⁰ Lewy’s conviction that the OA evidence for “the god of my/our/your father” –still very limited when Alt wrote his pioneering study– asks for a comparison with the patriarchal data is justified, as van der Toorn’s use of it demonstrates. Since the data have increased enormously in the two decades since *Family Religion* was published, I offer below a new overview and interpretation, which supplements and occasionally corrects what was thus far known.⁸¹ Its readers must realize that the evidence from the OA texts is completely different from that in the OB ones. OA letters are old and do not use greeting formulae with blessings and the numerous OA seals never mention that their owner is a servant of a particular deity. Instead, they repeatedly invoke and refer to the gods in the body of letters in a great variety of situations and formulations.

All OA references to *ilum* known in 1960 were collected and analyzed in Hirsch’s *UAR* of 1961, in the chapter “Der Schutzgott” (p. 35–46), to which he returned in his article *Gott der Väter* of 1966 (*AJO* 21, 56–58). His analysis was updated in p. 18*–21* of the second edition of *UAR* of 1972. A new analysis can build on Hirsch’s data and interpretations and on the observations made by Garelli in a review article of *UAR*.⁸² I cannot deal here with the occurrence of *ilum/ilī/ilšu* in personal names,⁸³ a comprehensive analysis of which is an important task that will yield new insights.⁸⁴ I only mention here the rare names in which a particular god is identified as “my/his god”: *ī-lī-Adad* (n/k 176:27) // *Adad-ilī* (b/k 682b:17), *Ištar-ilšu* (not rare), *Rašap-ilī* (b/k 682:5), and *Suen-ilšu* (AKT 3, 59:29). The last two are remarkable, because we have no OA evidence for

3, “Addu, the god, his name” (not a genitive compound; one might expect a statement that Addu is his dynastic god) and the epithet LUGAL *matātim*, which seems more appropriate for the supreme god Addu, than for the king. *Non liquet*. See now J.-M. Durand, Le dieu majeur de Qatna, *NABU* 2006/87 and J. M. Sasson, On the “Išhi-Addu” Seal from Qatna with Comments on Qatna Personnel in the OB Period, in Ş. Dönmez (ed.), *Veysel Donbaz’a Sunulan Yazılar. DUB.SAR É.DUB.BA.A. Studies Presented in Honour of Veysel Donbaz*, Istanbul, 2010, 243–250.

80. Mesopotamian texts do contain references that refer to a person’s tribal origin or his belonging to a particular clan; see Stol (2004: 705–706, § 6.3, “Der Ahnher”).

81. I gave a short summary of available data in *Families of Old Assyrian Traders*, in Veenhof (2014 § 6.3), “Care for the Ancestors and Veneration of the Family God”.

82. P. Garelli, La religion de l’Assyrie ancienne d’après un ouvrage récent, *RA* 56: 191–210. In *UAR* 19* Hirsch writes: “Ich möchte jedoch prinzipiell an der Trennung von *ilum* ohne Pronominalsuffix und *ilum* mit Pronominalsuffix festhalten. Unter ersterem ist sicherlich oft Aššur zu verstehen, für letzteres glaube ich nach wie vor dass mit ‘dein Gott, mein Gott’ usf. nicht Aššur gemeint sein kann.” I agree with him and believe that, while words like *ilum lu īde* may occasionally (in the mind of a writer) refer to a particular god, including Aššur, the reference may well be to “god” in general, as a supreme divine power. If so, one could almost render it by “the gods”. One may compare the use of *ilum* in the expression *ilum ay iddin*, “may god prevent (that...)”, regularly used in letters from Mari, and the use of the plural in statements such as *ša awāt ilē ana ša taništīm išakkunū*, “who treats the words of the gods as words of humans” (TC 3, 93:9–11).

83. J.J. Stamm, *Die Akkadische Namengebung* (Leipzig 1939) 209b, qualifies them as “Vertrauenssässerungen [...] der Namensträger nennt einen bestimmten Gott, dessen Wohltat er offenbar erfahren hat, sein ‘(Schutz)gott’.”

84. Hirsch collected and analyzed 75 such names to which we can now add another 25. Interesting new names are *Ilī-dādi*, *Ilī-ilmad*, *Ilī-išar*, *Ilī-ma-DINGIR*, *Ilī-SUKKAL*, *Ilī-tappā*, *Izizim-ilī* and *Šar-ilī*.

the status of Rašap⁸⁵ and Suen as “family god”, but this applies also to Ea and Šamaš, although we have the names *Ea-abušu* and *Šamaš-abī*.⁸⁶

3.2. What the gods are said or asked to do⁸⁷

In numerous passages, writers of letters invoke the gods to stress their sincerity and reliability, to dispute or condemn what an addressee says, or to make emphatic statements in the way of an oath or curse. They do so by uttering the wish that the gods may “see, watch” (*naṭālum*, once *dagālum*) or “know”, “take cognizance of” (*idā’um*) him or his addressee, that is act as witnesses, who accordingly can punish the one who lies, is not reliable or behaves in an evil way. The same purpose is served when gods are “to reject” (*nadā’um*) the one who is not sincere (the writer himself, his addressee or third persons). Occasionally also the past tense of *nadā’um* is used to state that the gods (must) have already done so if the speaker lies or cheats. In some cases, a writer declares that he is ready to swear by the gods invoked to prove his case (or has already done so), and the gods can also be asked not to let something happen (the vetitive of *tadānum*, “to allow to...” and of the D-stem of *taḥā’um*, “to let approach”). In addition, we read that the god(s) “come into action” (*izizzum*), “seize somebody by his hand” (*qātam šabātum*), “support him” (*abbuttam izizzum*), “guide him” (*radā’um*) and may bring him safely to his destination (*šallumum*).

We also have, as in Old Babylonian letters, repeated promises “to pray for” (*karābum* with personal dative) the addressee “before the god(s)”, a way in which the writer expresses his gratitude for what his addressee is asked to do or has done. People are also advised “to seek the god’s face” (*pānē ilim še’āum*), “to turn to the god” (*pānam ana DN šakānum*), “to grasp the god’s foot” (*šēp ilim šabātum*) and “to bring a sacrifice” (*niq’am naqā’um*) in order “to save one’s life” (*napištam eṭārum*), because gods can “have mercy” (*enānum, ennanē/ennanātīm laqā’um*). But, ultimately, what will happen “rests with/is left to the god” (*išti DN libši/libbiši*) and depends on his will (*šumma DN libbišu*). Gods can “call people to account” (*ša’ālum*), “warn” (*šutan’udum*) and ultimately punish them. In such a case (see below § 3.6), often because promises of votive gifts are not kept when (as Aššur-idī writes to his son; see below § 3.6.4) a man fails “to listen to the words of the gods” and has angered them by repeatedly breaking his promises and “speaking wickedness in his heart”. In such a case a god can “treat a person badly” (*lamniš epāšum*), so that suffers under “the hand of the god” (*qāti ilim*), who can “strike him” (*mahāšum*) with his weapon (see below, § 3.4, B1D, Aššurītum).

I list and number here the most frequently mentioned actions of the gods, most of which apparently can be expected from all of them. In the list of textual evidence for the occurrences of the gods (below § 3.4) I refer to these numbers and I quote only the more exceptional features (including certain spellings) and rarely attested actions under category 5, “other phrases”. References to still unpublished texts by their excavations numbers in § 3.2-4 omit the initial Kt (=Kultepe);⁸⁸ the name of the god Aššur is abbreviated to A., and occasional references to the list of occurrences in § 3.4 are in the form (A1, 1a) etc.

1. “To see, to witness”

- a. *naṭālum*, 3rd person sing., dual or plural of the precativ: *liṭṭul, liṭṭulā, liṭṭulū*, passim.
- b. *dagālum*, only once, in the precativ, *lidgulāni* (see B1C).

85. The man called *Rašap-ilī* may not have belonged to the Assyrian community, because the only text in which he occurs records dealings in Talhat, situated in the Northern Jezira. In the third mill. BC the cult of Rašap was prominent in Northern Syria (notably in the towns of Tunip and Hadanni), as documented by the Ebla texts, see A. Archi, *JANER* 13: 212-237, § 2.3.

86. Names with *il(i)šu* –Malik-ilišu, Nabi-ilišu, Nūr-ilišu, Warad-ilišu, Ilšu-dan, Ilšu-amur– are rare. Even rarer is *ilum* with a 2nd pers. sing. pron. suffix, attested in OA only in *Adad-ilka* (Kt h/k 36:3, 17 and 36; to be understood as said to the newborn boy), but also known in OAKk. (*Kur(u)b-ilak*) and in OB (*I-el-kā-pi₄-la-ah = Ilka-pilāh* in *Tell ed-Der* II, no. 26:4, ref. M. Stol). See for Mari, above note 21.

87. This paragraph was written before the publication of Kouwenberg’s *GOA*, which treats the syntax of such “oath-like assurances” in § 23.4. We were in substantial agreement about their interpretation, with one difference. I considered forms like DN *lu i-dī-a-ni/i-dī-a-kā* as *lu īde* with pron. acc. suffix, “DN may know me” = “take cognizance of what I say or do”. Kouwenberg derives them from *nadā’um*, “to reject”, attested in forms like DN *li-dī-a-ni/i-ta-ad-a-ni*, which are not precatives but as asseveratives. I have accepted his explanation.

88. I acknowledge with gratitude the possibility to quote from still unpublished texts deciphered and transliterated by many colleagues: S. Bayram, G. Barjamovic, J.G. Derksen, C. Günbattı, K. Hecker, H. Erol, Y. Kawasaki, M.T. Larsen, and C. Michel.

2. “To know”, *idā’um*, usually in the precative, with preposed detached *lu*, very frequent
 - a. absolute, *lu īde*, *īde’ā*, *īde’ū*, often in parenthesis, usually without complement, but at times followed by *ša* or *kīma* to introduce the object sentence, or by enclitic *-ma* to introduce the statement to which it applies (see below).
 - b. with *ina bare*, “(to judge, decide) between”, only twice, *ilum lu īde ina bareni* (see A1, 2a).
3. “To reject”, *nadā’um*, with personal accusative (noun or suffixed)
 - a. precative: DN *liddi’anni*.
 - b. past tense: DN (*lu*) *iddianni/iddiakka*.
 - c. perfect: *ittidi* (CCT 3, 16b:14, A. *u ilka awīlam i-tī-di-<ú>*); DN *ittad’anni*.
4. “To pray”, *karābum*, before (*mahar*) one or more gods, for a person (dative)
 - a. precative: *lakrubakkum*, *likrubūnikkum*, etc.
 - b. present-future: *akarrabakkum*, etc.
 - c. imperative: *kur(u)bam/kur(u)bim*, rarely without pers. dative suffix (B1D).
5. A variety of other actions and qualifications, quoted with the gods to which they apply.

The statements following the invocation of the gods to be witnesses or to reject the speaker (if he lies) appear in various syntactic constructions, which have not always been recognized or correctly translated. Some texts use *kīma* to introduce them, e.g. *kīma ana ahhuttim aše’e’uka*, “that I am striving for brotherhood with you” (CCT 2, 6:19-20), others *ša*, e.g. *ša ina ú-tí-i-tim ētirukani*, “(god knows) that I saved you from darkness”² (suggested by Larsen; AKT 6, 408:25-26). Some add the statement by means of the connective *-ma* followed by an indicative, e.g. *Aššur ittad’annima ana naruqqa kunūti akabbas*, “Aššur must have (lit. ‘has’) rejected me (if) I will impose on you for my joint-stock capital!” (ATHE 65:29; GOA 726³⁷ takes it as question: “has A. rejected me that I should...?”), or by a subjunctive, *ilum lu i-dī-a-<ni>-ma kēnatunni*, “god has rejected me (if I lie), it is the truth that...” (Prag I 479:9). Some do it asyndetically, invoking gods to be witnesses, e.g. *kakkī alaqqe*, “(that) I will take my weapon” (ATHE 27:10-12), *ilānukka abam [šaniam] la išū*, “(that) I have no father but you” (I 482:15’-16’). We also find the presentative particle *amma*: *ilum lu īde a-ma ebaruttum... kaspam tumtašše’e*, “god may know, is this really friendship... (that) you have robbed me of silver?” (c/k 583: 32-35). Since statements following such invocations are in the mode of an oath, they may be introduced by *lu* or *la* followed by an indicative or a subjunctive. *Lu* + indicative in a past tense states emphatically what has happened, e.g. *10 mana ana sahartika lu uqarrib*, “(that) I did transfer 10 minas to your small wares!” (n/k 481:16-20), and *kaspī... lu iruqanni*, “(that) my silver indeed escaped me!” (POAT 7, 37-41). With a present tense it may state a fact, e.g. *kutānū... lu ibaššiū*, “(that) the textiles are indeed still available” (AKT 7, 285:10-14), or a promise, e.g. 87/k 460, “Aššur is my witness, I will compensate 3 minas of silver” (*lu umalla*). The subjunctive after *la* is used to express a firm denial in *ahhuttī la talluku*, “(the gods may witness) that you are not practicing brotherhood with me!” (n/k 283:30-34), and *kaspam mimma... la alqe’u*, “(the gods may reject me if it is not true that) I really did not take any silver!” (BIN 6, 97:20-24). The subjunctive after *lu* occurs in *a[na] k[uāti] awātika libbī lu ma-ar-šū-ū*, “(that) I am indeed concerned about your affairs” (CCT 5, 22c:7-15). The same writers may use various constructions. Šalim-ahum, writing to his two sons, invokes the gods as witnesses *mimma libbī la ilamminuma*, “that I will certainly not get angry” (subjunctive, AKT 3, 67:20), and *la agammilka*, “that I will not favor you” (indicative, AKT 3, 71:36). Interesting are two texts where the invocation occurs with an irrealis. In AKT 7, 258:22-24 it is followed by one, *šummamen [...] ibašši... lumen addiššunu*, “(the gods may be witnesses) (that) if... had been present/possible, I would have sold them”. In AKT 7, 269:24-27, the invocation is embedded in an irrealis sentence: *šummamen la kuāti Aššur liddianni napaštušu lumen akkis*¹, “if it had not been for you – Aššur may reject me (if I lie) – I would have cut off his throat!”

3.3. The gods

The next questions are which gods are mentioned or invoked and which qualifications they receive, especially those expressing their relation to the writer or addressee (by means of possessive pronouns and by qualifications such as “the god of my/our/your father”). Also whether they occur alone or alongside the national god Aššur, various other gods and (rarely) “the ghosts” (of the ancestors). Moreover, there are some rare qualifications, designations and actions that refer to particular gods.

When the name of a god is not mentioned we have to deduce from the spelling of *ilum*, “god”, and occasionally from the verbal forms used,⁸⁹ whether one or more gods are meant. “God” is written with the logogram DINGIR (often with a phonetic complement, *-lum/lu-um/lim/lam*) or syllabically. In the latter case, the construct state occurs as *il₅* (also in *il₅-kà*, “your god”), rarely spelled *i-il₅* (also in *i-il₅-kà*), but also *ili*, spelled *i-li* and *i-lí* (e.g. *i-li-ni* in 93/k 198:25⁹⁰) and even *i-lu*, *i-lu-ni*, and *i-lu-ku-nu*, “our/your god”.⁹¹ DINGIR-*lu abini* in 93/k 296:17 and 527:3,12 (see B2, and D3) must be singular, “the god of our father”, because there is only one family god. Clear plurals are *i-lu-ku-nu* and *i-lu-ni* in letters exchanged between traders and their investors, representatives or senior partners (quoted below under B1A, 1a), each of whom belonged to a separate family with its own family god. The spelling *i-lu-ú* asks us to restore *i-lu-ú a-[ba-e-n]i*, “the gods of our fathers”, in AKT 8, 257:30-31¹ (B1B, 5c), where the writer addresses three persons with different family gods. This is also the case in the few other occurrences of *il₅ abbā’ēni*, e.g. in AKT 6, 408:14-15 and in CCT (5, 22c, 7-10) (B1B, 5c and B2, 1a), where alongside Aššur, Amurru and Ištar Star are invoked as DINGIR-*li a-ba-e-ni*. A clear distinction between the plural and the singular is found in Kays. 275, where Iddin-Ištar writes to “my investors”. In lines 5-6 he quotes what they wrote him, *Aššur ù i-lu-ni liṭṭulā*, where “our gods” refers to those of the various investors and the verb is in the plural,⁹² which is confirmed by the unique spelling DINGIR.HI.A-*ú-ni liṭṭulā* used by the same investors in KTS 2, 45:29 (B1A, 1a). But when Iddin-Ištar reacts to their letter he writes in Kays 275:15-15, *Aššur ù ilabrat liṭṭulā*, with the verb in the dual, where Ilabrat presumably is his family god. The plural must also be meant in *Aššur ù i-lu-ú ebaruttim liṭṭulā* (although the verb is in the dual) in AKT 6, 426:15-17, as the comparison with *A. u i-lu-ú ebaruttim li-ṭu-lu* in n/k 481:16-18 (where the verb is also in the plural)⁹³ shows. In *abbā’ūšunu mahar i-li-šu-nu ikribum iṭṭišunu ú-ša-a*, “as for their fathers, before their gods a curse came out of their mouth” (KTS 1, 15:24-25), the plural “fathers” suggests “their gods” (B1D, end). A plural is also attested in *ilu’a* (AKT 4, 42:23; B3, 2a), where the verb is in the plural (*īde’ū*). The “gods of friendship” (*ebaruttim*) and of “brotherhood” (*ahhuttim*; B, 1.d, end) mean the gods of friends and brothers (colleagues),⁹⁴ who of course were men of different families, and therefore with different family gods. This suggests that *il₅* in *Aššur u il₅ ebaruttim liṭṭulā* (KTS 1, 4b:6-8), *i-la* in *i-lá ahhuttim* (Prag I 447:11), and *ilu* in DINGIR-*lu ahhuttim* (ATHE 38:12) are plurals, expressed by the construct state singular before a nominal genitive,⁹⁵ while *i-lá* before *ahhuttim* could be due to crasis (pronounced as *ilāhhuttim*?). There may have been some confusion resulting in occasional wrong spellings of *ilum*, e.g. in *i-lu-ú ša ittamūni*, “the god(s) who were sworn by” (AKT 8, 256:3), since this *i-lu-ú* in l. 7 is the subject of a verbal form in the singular (*lu i-de₈-e*). A double plural, “the gods of my/our fathers”, meaning the ancestral gods, which is attested in Hittite sources,⁹⁶ does not occur in OA. Occasional spellings *i-lá-bi₄-a* and *i-lá-bi-ni* for *il(i) abia/abini* exhibit crasis, probably

89. But this is impossible if we have a series of gods, DN₁ (DN₂) ù *i-lu-ni/i-lu abini*, because the verb then is anyhow in the plural.

90. Quoted in Michel (2008b⁷⁰). She translates “nos dieux” and in 93/k 527:12 (note 71) DINGIR-*lu a-BE-ni* (also in 93/k 539:56) by “les dieux de nos ancêtres”, taking *a-be-ni* as plural. But it is a singular, since the father has only one family god and the plural would be *abbā’ēni*.

91. A. *i-li-ku-nu* in Ka 423:19, alongside *i-lu-ku-nu* in l. 7, could be a mistake. This is also possible for the rare spelling *la libbi i-le-e-ma*/DINGIR-*le-e* (Ankara 4679:16; AKT 9, 157:31, “against the wish of the god(s)” = “unfortunately” (used to report somebody’s death). This is suggested by the frequent singular in *la libbi ilim* (see for this expression GOA 175²), but a plural is theoretically possible. In OAA 1, 14:23-24, *awātum ša i-lí etawwānikkum, i-lí* must be a mistake for *i-lu*, cf. 26-27, *umma* DINGIR-*lu-ma awātini... tamtiši*, “the gods said: you have forgotten our words”.

92. J. Lewy used this argument when quoting this unpublished letter in HUCA 32: 47 note 101.

93. The use of the dual *liṭṭulā* in other occurrences does not prove that only two gods are meant, since the dual is stereotyped in such phrases, used also when three gods are mentioned as subject (w.g. in Aššur, Amurru and Ištar Star *liṭṭulā*, in CCT 5, 22c:7-10).

94. In OA the abstract is also used as collective, e.g. *tamkāruttum* means “traders, agents”. The combination occurs more often, e.g. in c/k 639b:4-6, *awātum ša ahhutti u ebārutti*.

95. The curious spelling *il₅-li* (meant as *il₅^{li}*?) *e-ba-ru-<tí>-ni* in AKT 9, 61:28 (alongside *il₅ abini*, see below under B2, 1a) could render a construct state of the plural.

96. See S. Görke, Zur Bedeutung der hethitischen Familiengottheiten, in M. Hutter & S. Hutter-Braunsar (eds.), *Offizielle Religion, lokale Kulte und individuelle Religiosität* (AOAT 318), Münster 2004, 201-212.

reflecting the pronunciation, and this may have caused some uncertainty about the spelling of the construct state of *ilum*.

3.4. The textual evidence for the occurrence of the gods⁹⁷

A. One god

A1. *ilum* without possessive suffix

- 1a** A 3:18 (Mem. Garelli, 73-74), [...] DINGIR *liṭṭul*.
- 2a** AKT 6, 408:25; AKT 8, 256:27, *ilum lu ṭde ina bareni*;⁹⁸ VS 26, 194:8'-9', same; ICK 1, 63:43; POAT 17:29; c/k 583:32; f/k 5:5, followed by *u libbakunu lu ṭde*; n/k 416:21; 94/k 413:24; Adana 237B:16-17, 42.
- 3b** I 479:9-10, read *ilum [li]-dī-a-<ni>-ma*.⁹⁹
- 3c** n/k 1247:14, DINGIR^{lu-um} *i-tī-dī-kà...e la tarde'am*, "god has rejected you... you must not fail to lead" = "god must have rejected you if you fail to lead".
- 5a** Frequently in *la libbi ilim*, "unfortunately" (see above note 91).
- 5b** BIN 4, 96:17-21, *kīma DINGIR u eṭemmē tagammiluma... ēpuš*, "take action to do the god and the ghosts a favor!"
- 5c** AKT 8, 256:3-7, *alē i-lu-ū ša ittamūni* ⁵ *aklam ša nēkuluni kāsam ša ništū lu ṭdē*, "where is the god¹ by whom the oath was sworn? He surely knows the bread we ate and the cup we drank" (by means of which a partnership was concluded), followed by l. 27 quoted above under 2a.
- 5d** n/k 536:15-16 (courtesy Günbattu), DINGIR *lamniš uštana''adka*, "god is warning you in a malicious way".
- 5e** AKT 6, 287:8-12, *kīma annakam ana bēt ilim turruduma ištī ilim ennānātīm tētarrišu u mahar ilika tutanannunu*, "instead of going down there to the temple of the god and asking the god constantly for mercy and pleading before your god...".
- 5f** TC 1, 26:32-35, Šalim-ahum asks Ilabrat-bāni to supply 1 mina of silver from his own funds "because of the god... may the god who is the owner of the *ikribū* guide you" (*aššumi ilim... ilum bēl ikribē lirdika*) (cf. 2, 2a for Aššur *bēl ikribē*).
- 5g** n/k 1189:10-13, a letter from ^fAkatiya in Assur to a trader (*ArAn* 2 [1996] 14¹⁷), "In addition to my own misery your boy can also not even raise his head due to the hand of the god!" (*ṣuhārkunu rēšamma la inašši ina qāti ilim*).¹⁰⁰
- 5h** 87/k 34:8, a packet with 10 minas of silver, my *ikribū*, has been deposited among the packets of his father in the temple of the god (*illibbi riksē... É DINGIR nadi*).
- ilū*, plural **5i** KTS 1, 15:24-25, *mahar i-li-šu-nu ikribum ipptišunu ušā*, "(As if I had angered their fathers whereupon) in the presence of their gods a curse came out of their mouth!".
- 5j** 98/k 1181 (*JEOL* 35-36 [2001] 103), a unique appeal for help in a late OA letter addressed "to the gods and the City (*ana i-lí-ú a-lim^{ki}*) by traders who face serious problems."
- iltum* **5k** f/k 29:23-24 (courtesy L. Umur), *iltum tuštamdi'anni*, "(I will come to bring a sacrifice and then go on with my journey), the goddess has threatened me".
- [NB. See below § 3.9 for *ilū* referring to (golden) figurines of gods]

97. I may have missed a few occurrences, due to the unsystematic way in which many OA texts are published or quoted; moreover, the indices of some editions do not include the names of gods. Because there is confusion about the construct state of *ilum* in the singular and plural, I give the relevant forms in transliteration.

98. This means that the god is asked to judge, to arbitrate between them; cf. in OB *AbB* 5, 39:7-9, *jatta u katta Ilabrat ili abika lišāhiz*.

99. Thus because of the following *kīnātummi* (subjunctive), "that it is true, truly", referring to the following "that I gave to you"; this excludes 3a, which would require "(if) it is *not* true that...".

100. "Misery" translates *mānīhātum*, the plural of *mānahtum*, a spelling also attested in MAss. I do not list here n/k 76:5-6 (*AfO* 35: 52), [*il⁵*]-*tum u DINGIR.HI.A ina barēni lū šībū*, "let the goddess⁹ and the gods be witnesses between us", which introduces the solution of a disagreement about a debt arranged in a purely Anatolian context.

A2. Aššur (not included the many references to the oath by “Aššur’s dagger”)

- 1a** KTS 2, 35:4; TC 3, 32:20; AKT 2, 28:14; AKT 7, 285:10'; c/k 284:30; 87/k 460:32; 89/k 290:25 (lines 19-20, *A. u Amurru*).
- 2a** POAT 8:46; CCT 4, 49a:29; c/k 760:6; n/k 1192:36-37, *A. bēl ikribē lu tde*.
- 3a** AKT 7, 269:25, *A. liddianni*, followed by a statement in the irrealis.
- 3c** ATHE 65:29, *A. ittad'annima*, followed by a promise.
- 4a** KUG 39:18, *ṽLamassutum* to Pūšu-kēn, following a request; Prag I 761:12 and 23, a request followed by a repeated promise; AKT 8, 253:16, an Assyrian to two Anatolians; AAA 1 no. 6:13, *likrubūnikkum*, “so that they may pray for you” (official letter to an Anatolian ruler, if he complies with the request of *kārum* Kanesh).
- 4b** c/k 228:24//245:25-26//748:4'-5', *akarrabakkunūti*, Eliya to three persons (the promise is preceded by “the tin is *ikribū* of Aššur”); passim in letters of Assur’s ruler (*waklum*), now also Kt n/k 821:20- 22 (*JNES* 77 [2018] 60).
- 5a** KTS 1, 1a:23, *išti A. libši*, “let it be with A.”
- 5b** n/k 1174:15, *šumma A. libbišu*, “if A. so wishes.”
- 5c** 93/k 539:15-17, *šummamen A. ana bēt abini u eṭammē abini la idki- anni*, “if A. had not aroused me (to act) for our paternal house and the ghosts of my father...” (cf. Michel 2008b, note 84).
- 5d** n/k 1 336:11, *Aššur uštana''adka*, “Aššur warns you” (*ArAn* 2 [1996] 14¹⁹); BIN 6, 179:19'-20'; 89/k254:3-7 (by means of an illness); 92/k 329:20 (courtesy H. Erol); see above A1, 5d.
- 5e** *Aššur ennān ālišu ilteqe*, TPAK I, 45:22 (sic); 92/k 329:22-23 (courtesy of H. Erol), *Aššur ennānika lilqe*, “may Aššur have mercy upon you”.
- 5f** n/k 1336:24, *išti Aššur napaštam eṭir*; AKT 11, 102:20, *napšātini-BA išti Aššur eṭir*, “save our very lives with (the help of) Aššur!”; n/k 650:23f. (*ArAn* 2 [1996] 15²⁶), letter to a trader from his sister in Assur, *šēp Aššur bēlika šabatma napaštaka eṭir*, “grasp the foot of Aššur, your lord and save your life!”
- 5g** n/k 1192:34 (*ArAn* 4 [1998] 170-172), *adi A. ušallamukama*, “until Aššur makes it well with you and...” (in lines 27-28, *Aššur u ili abia*, see below B1B, 5a).
- 5h** KTB 6:8, letter to Imdī-illum, *kīma ša Aššur awātka damqat*, “your word is as pleasant/favorable as that of Aššur.”
- 5i** 87/k 415:5 (courtesy of Hecker), *kīma ša A-šur tēnunamma*, “you had mercy on me as if (you were) Aššur.”
- 5j** BIN 6, 179:16'-18', *ana a-WA-ú-k[ā?...]ana A. panika šuknam*, “in order to/for... turn(ing) your face to Aššur”.

A3. Anonymous family god: “the god of my (etc.) father” and “my (etc.) god”

- 1a** 93/k 527:12-13, *DINGIR-lu abini u eṭammū abini liṭṭulā*, “may the god of our father and the ghosts of our father be witnesses” (see Michel 2008b, 192⁷¹).
- 4a** n/k 530:26-27, *mahar i-lí-a lakrubakkunūti*, letter by Šīmat-Suen in Assur to her brother in Kanesh.
- 4b** *OrNS* 50: 101, no. 2:30, *mahar i-li-a akarrabakkum*, letter by Tarām-Kube to her husband in Kanesh.
- 4c** 87/k 313:23-24, *mahar i-li-kà ana šuhārim kurubšum*; 88/k 347:22 (courtesy of Kawasaki), *mahar i-li-a kurubam*, letter by Hazua to his mother (he should have written **i-li-ki kur(u)bim*). CCT 4, 6f:9-11, *niq'am mahar i-li-kà iqima kurubam*, “bring a sacrifice before your god and pray for me”. VS 26, 33: 1.e.3', *ina mahar i-lí abišu [...]*.
- 5a** k/k 108:27- 29, “because the god of your father and the god of my father stepped in (*i-lu abika u i-lu abia izzizūma*) I and my merchandise got safely out of your house”.
AKT 9, 156:13-15, *a-na-ma ilš-kà ú i-li/izzizūni idīnūma*, “since your god and my god came into action and passed a verdict...”.
- 5b** VS 26, 33: 21', *ina mahar i-lí abišu*, “before the god of his father do not treat me [...]!” (letter to a woman).¹⁰¹

101. This damaged and emotional letter of Imdī-illum and his daughter, sent from Anatolia to another daughter in Assur, has been treated by G. Kryszat, *AoF* 34: 213-215. In lines 21'-22' he reconstructs a statement about the death of a man (*mahar ili abišu* [PN *mēt*]), which is not acceptable; it remains unclear to whom the suffix of *abišu* refers.

- 5c** AKT 4, 69:20-21, *i-li liš'alka*, “may my god call you to account!” (cf. a/k 583:21-22, below B1A, 5b).
- 5d** AKT 6, 287:8-12, *kīma... mahar i-li-ka*¹² *tūtanannunu*, “instead of imploring your god...” (see above A1, 5c; differentiates simple *ilum* from *ilika*)
- 5e** AKT 6, 75:62-63 (// 76:62), *pānē i-li-kà la taše'e*, “you do not seek the face of your god!” (Šallim-Aššur is accused of indifference).
- 5f** CCT 3, 20:40, *šēp i-lí-kà šabat*, “grasp the feet of your god”, gesture of submission (letter to Pūšu-kēn by his wife in Assur, cf. A2, 5f).¹⁰²
- 5g** AKT 7, 294/t, 14-15, *Happuala kāsam ša i-li-šu-nu išatti*, “H. will drink the cup of their god(s)”.¹⁰³
- + *eṭammū* **5h** c/k 266:19-20, *i-le/i ù eṭammē azannan*, “I provide for the gods/my god and the ghosts”, letter of Šimat-Ištar from Assur (see Dercksen 2015, 53).
- A4. Identified as personal or family god**
- Aššur **4a** AKT 4, 63:14-15, *mahar A. i-lí-a lakrubakkum*, “before my god Aššur”, letter of Šimat-Aššur in Assur to Aduman in Kanesh, after a request for silver (exceptional, but explainable because Šimat-Aššur most probably was a priestess of Aššur, “her god”).
- Ištar Star **4a** AKT 6, 526:15-16, *mahar Ištar kakkibim i-li-ni lakrubam*, “(Provide me with 5 shekels of silver as/for a sacrifice...) and I will pray before Ištar Star, our god” (letter by Idnaya to Adida and Ali-ahum);
- Ištar-ZA.AT **5a** n/k 1456:17-20, *awātim ša mahar*¹⁹ *i-lí abia Ištar-ZA.AT*²⁰ *ātawwukum* “the words I spoke to you before Ištar-ZA.AT, the god of my father” (letter by Ušur-ša-Ištar to Ikūn-piya).
- Ištar **5b** CCT 4, 24a:17, the writer expresses the trust that Kura’s house will be saved and that “Ištar, his god, will intervene for him” (*Ištar DINGIR-šu/abbuttašu izzaz*).¹⁰⁴
- A5. Anonymous god**
- 5** VS 26, 34:20-21, *i-lí ummiānē iraddeka*, “the god of the investors will guide you”.
- A6. Named god**
- Ištar **5** n/k 545:7-8 (*JNES* 77[2018] 62), *Ištar lamniš*⁸ *teppašanni*, “Ištar treats me badly” (letter to Ušur-ša-Ištar from *awīltum*).

B. *ilum* together with other gods

B1. After Aššur

B1A. Aššur + *ilum* + possessive suffix

- 1a** *ilka*: CCT 4, 7b:8-9; POAT 33:14-15; TC 1, 20:46; TC 1, 31:10; c/k 53:25 (*li-tù-lá' kīma...*); 284:4-5; n/k 1277:13 (*DINGIR-kà*); 92/k 640:26 (courtesy of H. Erol; A. u *il₅-kà*);
- + plural *ilū* *i-lu-ku-nu*: BIN 4, 32:26, *li-tù-<lu>* (in a letter of Pūšu-kēn to his investors and representatives); KTS 2, 45:28-29, A. u *DINGIR.HI/A- ú-ni li-tù-lu* (his investors to Iddin-Ištar), and Kayseri 275:5-6, A. u *i-lu-ni li-tù-lu* (to his investors by Iddin-Ištar; cf. below B1D for lines 15- 16, where I. invokes A. and Ilabrat as witnesses, *liṭṭulā*). but: A. u *i-lu-ku-nu li-tù-lá*, BIN 4, 33:12-13 (letter of Pūšu-kēn to Aššur-imittī and Šu-Hubur).
- + *ilum* **3c** CCT 3, 16b:14, A. *-ma u ilka awīlam i-tí-dí-<ú>*, “A. himself and your god have rejected the man!”; *JCS* 14 (1960), 8, no. 3:34-35, A. u *ilka i-ta-ad-a-ni-ma (atte'ertika la anahhid)*; 93/k 419: i.e., A. u *ilka i-ta-[ad-a-ni]*?

102. KTS 15:41-42, *ištēn atta i-lí tukultī*⁴² *u bāšti abaka lu ša-lim-ma kurbamma* seems to be addressed to the recipient of this letter, Imdī-ilum: “You are unique², my god, my trust and my vitality...”. Hirsch, *UAR* 15, translates “einer (bist) du, mein Gott... möge deinen Vater heil machen” (*lāšallim*), which makes *ilī* the god of the writer, which does not convince me.

103. In the course of a settlement of accounts, apparently a ritual accompanying an oath to confirm his statement. The settlement was between the Anatolian Happuala and two Assyrians and the suffix “their” presumably refers to the god of the latter, Aššur.

104. See for this letter Michel, *Innāya*, II, no. 5, but I do not take *Ištar DINGIR-šu* as a personal name (in which she follows CAD A/I, 50, b, 1').

- 4a**...*mahar A. u ilia lakrubakkum* (etc.) in letters of the ruler of Assur: AKT 2, 22:19-20; KTS 1, 30:17-18; 31a:8-9; POAT 18A:29-30; VS 26, 73:12-14; perhaps Chantre 12:9' (IGI Aššur [...]).
- 4c**...AKT 2, 40:13-14, *mahar A. u i-li-ki kurbim*, letter of ^fAbaya in Assur to her brother(?) Šumi-abiya in Kanesh.
- 5a**...CCT 4, 14b:8-9, *A. u ilka qāṭṭ iṣṣabtūma*, “A. and your god have supported me (and I am now well)” (letter by Adida to Innāya).
- 5b**...a/k 583:21-22, *A. u DINGIR^{il}-kà liš'alāni*, “let A. and your god call me to account!”
- 5c**...91/k 217:13, “may A. and your god remove themselves from me!” (*A. u i-lu-ku-nu li-ru-qá-ni*).¹⁰⁵
- 5d**...AKT 7, 258:31-32, “1 mina of silver L. *ana* ³² A. u i-li-kà a li x x” (no photo or copy; in l. 22: *A. u ^dAdad li[ṭṭu]lā*, see B1C, *Adad*, 4a).
- 5e**...AKT 4, 69:7-9, 20-21, “Why do I hear that in your view I have become a non-gentleman? Do not...¹⁰⁶ with/from A. and my god!” (*išti* ⁷ A. u i-li'-a ⁸ e ta-at-ba-al'; later followed by ²⁰ i-li addressed to what seems to be an adopted as son).
- 5f**...92/k 389: 9-10 (courtesy of H. Erol), IGI GÍR *ana A. u i-li-ku-nu amrāma*, “inspect (the textiles) before the dagger for A. and your gods?” (order by the *kārum* to a trader and his caravan, therefore *i-li* probably plural).
- 5g**...94/k 184:3-6 (courtesy of C. Michel), *miššum... ana ālim la tallakamma* ⁵ šēp A. u i-li-kà ⁶ la tašabbatma ennanātim la tarašši, “why don't you come to the City to grasp the feet of Aššur and your god in order to obtain mercy?” (in l. 18 only: *šēp Aššur*)
- B1B.** Aššur + *il(i/u) abim* + possessive suffix
- 1a**...BIN 6, 119:11-12, *A. u il [abini] liṭṭu[lā]* (cf. lines 29-30, under 2a); AKT 6, 233:13, *A. u i-lá-bi-ni liṭṭulā*, letters exchanged between brothers and a brother and a sister; difficult: KTK 18:11', *A. u <<KI>> il₅ abini liṭṭulā*.
- 2a**...BIN 6, 119:29-30, *A. u il₅ abini lu ṭde['ā]*; 92/k 536:19-20, *A. u i- lí <> abia [lu] ide'ā* (courtesy H. Erol).
- 4b**...m/k 20:14-15, *mahar A. u i-li abia lakrubakkum*, letter by Abaya in Assur to her brother(?) Šumi-abiya in Kanesh.
- 5a**...n/k 1192:27-28, *ina mati A. u i-lí abia ušallumūka*, “when finally A. and the god of my father make it well with you (and you can settle accounts)” (cf. above A2, 5g).
- 5b**...KTK 18:19', *adi A. u DINGIR a-b[i-ni...] iṣakkunu* (see for l. 11', above under B1B, 1a).
- ilū +* **5c**...AKT 6, 408:13-15, *kēna awātum* ¹⁴ ša mahar Aššur u i-li¹⁵ a-ba-e-ni tatamma'aninni.
abbā'ēni “Truly, these were the words you swore to me before Aššur and the gods of our fathers” (letter by Ennam-Aššur to his brother-in-law); AKT 8, 257:30-31, *A. ú i-lu-ú* ³¹ a-[ba-e-ni]¹ [i-ṭu-l]á (correct the restored *a-[bi-ni]* of the edition; cf. CCT 5, 22c:9, below B2, 1a).
- + *eṭammū* **5d**...93/k 514:49, *a-na-mi-in A. u eṭammē abini damiqmin*, “would that be good to Aššur and
abini the ghosts of our father?” (Michel 2008b, 194⁸¹; cf. 93/k 530, below B2, 5c)
- B1C.** Aššur + second god, identified as “the god of my (etc.) father” or as “my (etc.) god”
- Adad* **4a**...AKT 6, 792:20-22, *mahar A. u ^dAdad i-li abini lakrubakkum*, letter by Šu-Bēlum.
- Amurrum* **1a**...BIN 6, 99:8-10, *A. u A[murru]m i-lá-b[i₄-a] liṭṭu[lā]*; CCT 5, 1a: 31-33, same (*ili abia*); see also below under *eṭammū*.
- 1b**...KTS 2, 52:13-15, *A. u Amurru il₅-kà* ¹⁵ <<il₅-kà KI>> lidgulāni.¹⁰⁷

105. A letter whose address is missing; translation suggested by Kouwenberg.

106. The somewhat damaged sign AL is not very convincing (cf. the broad AL in l. 20) and there does not seem to be an (erased?) sign in l. 8 after AL⁷.

107. Correct the *editio princeps* and the rendering in *Innāya* II, no. 65. As the copy shows *ilka* clearly belongs after Amurru and is repeated at the beginning of the next line (as the scribe repeated *azakkar* of the end of l. 12 at the beginning of l. 13), apparently not content with the somewhat cramped writing on the edge. I do not follow Kryszat (2006: 54-55), who wants to read *Amurru ilka il₅ kà-ki*, “A., your god, the god of the weapons”, a unique designation, not expected here, and I consider KI a mistake.

- 2a** AKT 1, 17:38-39, A. u *Amurru* i-li abini lu īde'ā (letter by Aššur- nādā to Ennam-Aššur and Šumi-abiya; see for the damaged KTS 1, 41c:17-18, below, B1D, 2a).
- 3b** KTK 14:13'-14', A. u *Amurru* il₅ [abia/abini' li]-dī-a-ni.
- Ilabrat* **1a** CCT 3, 16b:5, A. u *Ilabrat* il₅ abini liṭṭulā (l. 14, A. u i-il₅-ka).
- 5** TC 3, 46:10', A. u *Ilabrat* i-li abia awātam annītam e iddinā.
- Ištar-ZA.AT* **1a** n/k 109:24-25, A. u *Ištar-ZA.AT* i-lá-bi₄-a; n/k 283:30-31.¹⁰⁸
- 3a** BIN 6, 39:18, A. u *Ištar-ZA.AT* il₅-ka liddi'āni.
- Išartum* **2a** AKT 4, 50:22-23, A. u *Išartum* il₅ abia lu īde'ā.
- B1D.** Aššur followed by another god not qualified as “the god of my father”
- Adad* **1a** AKT 7, 258:22, A. u ^dAdad li[ṭṭu]lā, followed by an oath; in lines 31-32, “1 mina of L. silver ana ³² A. u i-li-kà a li x x” (no photo or copy; is “your god” Adad?); AKT 7, 259:35, A. u ^d[IM]? (both letters by Ennam-Aššur to Aššur-rē'ṭ).
- Amurru* **1a** AKT 3, 64:16-17; ICK 1, 117:14; 89/k 290:19, always liṭṭulā.
- 2a** KTS 1, 41c:17-18, damaged, read: A. u *Amurru* [lu i-de₈]-a-ma.¹⁰⁹
- 3b** AKT 3, 62:7, A. u *Amurru* li-dī-a-ni.
- 4c** TPAK 1, 58:35-36, mahar A. u *Amurru* kurub.
- 5** RA 60 (1966) 144, “tabl. Dessalien”:19-20, iṣti A. u *Amurru* lib- biši, “let it be with (according to the will of?) A. and Amurru” (cf. KTS 1, 23:23, iṣti A. libši, above A2, 5a).
- Aššurītum* **5** TC 3, 93:5-6, 17-8, kakkē ša A. u Aššurītum imhušūka... A. u Aššurītum uštana' udūka, “the weapons of A. and Aššurītum have hit you... A. and Aššurītum are warning you!” (Aššur-idī to his son Aššur-nādā).
- Ilabrat* **1a** AKT 3, 67:20-21; 71:36; POAT 7, 37-38; TC 1, 15:17-18; VS 26, 71:4; Kayseri 275:15-16; always liṭṭulā.
- 2a** TPAK 47:17-18, A. u *Ilabrat* lu īde'ā, “whenever things stink one smells it!”
- Ištar Star* **1a** BIN 6, 55:5-6, A. u *Ištar* kakkubum [liṭṭu]lā.
- Ištar-ZA.AT* **1** ATHE 27:10-11; VS 26, 71:4; n/k 1340: 12-13; AKT 9, 11:11-13.
- 5** KTS 1, 15:27, awātam annītam A. u *Ištar-ZA.AT* e uṭahhiā, “may A. and Ištar-ZA.AT not allow this to affect us!”
- Nisaba* **1a** 87/k 460:16-17, A. u *Nisaba* liṭṭulā “that 20 days are not sufficient” (the same man in l. 32 writes ^dAššur liṭṭul).
- 4a** BIN 6, 64:45, mahar A. u *Nisaba* likru[bakkunūti] (letter to three traders).
- 5** 87/k 438:36-37, ana A. u *Nisaba* (^dŠE) uṭtallil, “I sinned against A. and Nisaba”.
- Wēr* **1a** v/k 7+, III':8, A. u ^dWe-e[r] liṭṭul[ā], (school letter), see K. Hecker *Fs N. Özgüç* (1993) 283, collated, see WZKM 86 (1996) 425².
- ila/u ahuttim* **1a** ATHE 38:12, A. u DINGIR-lu ahuttim liṭṭulā, “A. and the gods of the colleagues”; Prag I 447:11, A. u i-lá ahuttim liṭṭulā; n/k 544:24-25 (courtesy of C. Günbatt), A. u i-li ahuttim liṭṭulā.
- il(u) ebaruttim* **1a** AKT 6, 426:15-17 and KTS 1, 4b:6-8, A. u il₅ ebaruttim liṭṭulā, “A. and the gods of the friends”; n/k 481:16-18, A. u i-lu-ú ebaruttim li-ṭu-lu (cf. B2, 1a, end).
- 3a** I 784:9, [A.] u DINGIR ebaruttim [li-dī]-a-ni.
- ili ummiānē/ia* **1a** TC 3, 32:31, A. u i-lí ummiānia (sing.) liṭṭulā (cf. VS 26, 34:20-21, i-lí ummiānē iraddeka, “will guide you”, A5, 5).
- il šābim* **2a** m/k 7:40, A. u i-il₅ šābim a-ma me ú nim lu i-de₈; cf. in the same letter, i-il₅ Kaniš, below B2, 2a.

108. The reading of this name is uncertain, one possibility is Manzāt, see *UAR* 25-26 with note 123 and *Nachträge*, 14a. Manzāt, if correct, would equate the goddess with ^dTIR.AN.NA, “Rainbow”, attested in Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian personal names (see *CAD* M/2, 231, c). In Old Assyrian a harnesser has the name *Dān-Ištar-ZA.AT* (ICK 1, 49+131) and in ICK 1, 28b:13-14 (below B3, 4a) *Ištar-ZA.AT* appears alongside *Ištar*.

109. *UAR*, *Nachträge* 8, wants to restore *Amurru* [il₅-kà], which Kryszat (2006: 56, 7), follows, but this is doubtful.

B1E. Uncertain and damaged

- 1a**.....ATHE 31:41-42; Prag I 482:14'-15', [A. ù...] *liṭṭulā*, "I have no father but you!"; 87/k 445:5, A. u ^dx-x (x) *liṭṭulā*; LB 1226 rev:3'-4', A. [u DN/ilka² li]-ṭù-lá (letter to Innāya).
4a.....Chantre 12:9'-10', *mahar* A. [u...] ^{10'} *lakrubakkum* (letter by Ilabrat-bāni to Šu-Išhara).
 ?.....BIN 6, 33:6, A. u *il*₅ [...].

B2. Aššur and two other gods

- + anonymous family gods **1a**.....Ka 423:18, A. *i-li-ku-nu u DINGIR-li abia liṭṭulā*, "may A., your^{plur} god and the god of my father be witnesses!"
 + anonymous family gods + *eṭammū abini* **5b**.....93/k 527:2-4, *anāku ana A. DINGIR-lu a-bi-ni u eṭammē a-bi-ni u kunūti kittam ukāl*, "I stick to the truth before A., the god of our father and the ghosts of our father and to you^{plur}" (cf. below B3, 1a).
 + *Ištar-ZA.AT* + family god **1a**.....CCT 2, 6:17-19, A. *Ištar-ZA.AT u i-lí abika liṭṭulā*, "may A., Ištar-ZA.AT and the god of your father be witnesses" (see H. Hirsch, *Afo* 25 [1974-77], 64).
 + *Amurrum* + *Ištar Star* CCT 5, 22c:7-9, A., *Amurrum* ⁸ u *Ištar kakkabum* ⁹ DINGIR-li *a-ba-e-ni liṭṭulā* (note the plural "the gods of our fathers").
 + *Amurrum* + *il Kaniš* **2a**.....m/k 7:18-19, A. *Amurrum u i-il₅ Kaneš lu i-de-<'a>?* "may A., Amurrum and the god(s) of Kanesh know!"
 + *Adad* + *Bēlum ilī* **5a**.....A. u *Adad u Bēlum i-li* may bless/curse a man, in two inscriptions, of Erišum I (*RIMA* 1, p. 21:24. 74 and 37:10).
 + *Amurrum* + *pirikkum ša Aššur* **3a**.....BIN 6, 97:20-24, A. u *Amurrum il₅-ka* ²¹ u *pirikkum ša << ša>> A. ša atma'akkunni li-dí-a-ni*, "may A. and Amurrum and the *pirikkum*¹¹⁰ of A. by which I swore to you reject me (if)...".
 + *Amurrum* + *eṭemmū ša* **1a**.....91/k 139:26-28, A. *Amurrum u eṭemmū ša abia liṭṭulāni la asalliu-kani*, "A. and Amurrum and the ghosts of my father may witness that I am not cheating you".
 + *Ilabrat* + *eṭal/emmū ša abini* 93/k 198:25-26, [A]ššūr *Ilabrat i-l[i]-ni [ù] eṭemmū ša a-bi-ni [liṭtu-lā]*, "A., our god Ilabrat and the ghosts of our father may be witnesses" (his sister to Aššur-taklāku, see Michel 2008b n. 70).
5c.....93/k 530:37-38, [*šumma*]men A. DINGIR-ki u *eṭammē [abi]ni damiq-men*, "if it had been pleasing (to) A., to your god and to the ghosts of our father" (Aššur-taklāku to his sister; Michel 2008b, note 81).
5d.....93/k 539:56-57, *ša A. DINGIR-lu abini u eṭammū abini ihliqūni*, "(rumors) that A., the god of our father and the ghosts of our father have perished" (Michel 2008b, 195⁸⁵).
 + *il abini* + *ilī ebaruttini* **1a**.....AKT 9, 61:27-29, A. *il₅ a-bi-ni ù il₅^{li} e-ba-ru-<ti>-ni/liṭṭulā*, "may A., the god of our father and the gods of our friends be witnesses!"

B3. Gods without mention of Aššur

- ilu abini* + *eṭammū abini* **1a**.....93/k 527: 12-13, DINGIR-lu *a-bi-ni u eṭammū abini liṭṭulā*, "may the god of our father and the ghosts of our father be witnesses" (Michel 2008b, 192⁷¹; cf. 93/198 and 91/139 (B2, 1a) and c/k 266:19-20 (A3, 5h).
Ištar + *Ištar-ZA.AT* **4a**.....ICK 1, 28b:13-15, [*mahar*] *Ištar* ¹⁴ u *Ištar-ZA.AT-ma² lakrubak-kum* (letter of Ištar-bāšṭi, daughter of Imdī-ilum to Aššur-šulūli).
Šarra-mātān ilū'a + *Ištar* **2a**.....AKT 4, 42:23 *Šarra-mātān i-lu-a u Ištar lu īde'ū'*, "May Šarra-mātān, my gods, and Ištar know".¹¹¹

110. The meaning of *pirikkum* is not known. In CCT 4, 43a:31-32 one of two conflicting parties "[went]² before the dagger of Aššur and swore by Aššur's *pirikkum* (*pirikkam*³² *ša Aššur it[ma]*). *Family Religion* 73³³ argues for a meaning "shrine", by which one could swear. *CAD* P 397, s.v. *pirikku* A, sticks to "a divine symbol", perhaps a loan from Sumerian *pirig*, and distinguishes it from *pirikku* B, also attested at Mari, which seems to refer to a sacred locale or facility; see now also A.2879 (Durand 2008: 193, 7) and for this meaning now also W.R. Mayer in *OrNS* 86: 27.

111. The reading is based on a collation by J.G. Dercksen, see *NABU* 2011/75. I assume that *ilū'a* is in apposition to Šarra-mātān, so that two gods are invoked and not three. An independent plural would be exceptional, leave the identity of the gods unknown and is unlikely since a man had only one family god.

C. Other mentions of gods in various contexts

C1. Aššur and Šamaš

CCT 6, 14:49-51, “What profit do *pirikannu*-textiles yield that I should I trade *pirikannū*? May Aššur and Šamaš trample down that profit to dung!” (*nēmalam šuāti Aššur u^dUTU a-kà-bi-im li-dí-šu*).¹¹²

C2. “Aššur, Bēlum and our god”

KTBI 13:3-6, *I UDU ana A. I UDU ana Bēlim I UDU ana i-li-ni ninaqqi*, “we will sacrifice one sheep to A., one to Bēlum and one to our god”.

C3. “Aššur, Adad and Bēlum, my god”

RIMA 1, p. 21:24. 74 and 37:10, *A. u Adad u Bēlum i-li* may bless or curse a man, in two inscriptions, of Erišum I.

C4. “The gods/my god and the demons”

93/k 296:17-20, *ana ša i-le u ša ú-tù-ke ša ittanallukuninni qatī u šēpī aštakan*, “I resisted with (lit. ‘have set’) hands and feet against the (messages) of the gods and the demons who keep visiting me” (letter by a woman, when her son had been arrested in Anatolia; see Michel 2015, 87¹⁴).

D. “Aššur and the libellum of your (ETC.) father”

D1. n/k 494:14-15 (courtesy of C. Günbattı). Two women ask Ištar-lamassī to warn her husband in view of his well-being and to come, together with him, to Assur; “may he¹⁴ see the eye of Aššur and the eye of the...¹⁵ of his father!” (*ēn A. u ēn li-BE-tim¹⁵ ša abišu lēmur*). We may compare:

D2. CCT 3, 25:22-26. Tarām-Kube in Assur writes to her husband Innāya in Kanesh: “Please, come here... and see the eye of Aššur, your god, and your...” (*ēn A. DINGIR-kà ù li-BE-tí-kà²⁵ amur*).

D3. AKT 8, 263:30-32. Šāt-Tašmētim, in a letter sent from Assur to Puzur-Anna and Šu-Suen (presumably her brothers), expresses the fear that their paternal house (*bēt abikunu*) may be harmed and asks for silver. “If you love the... of your father (*šumma li-BE-tí³¹ abikunu tara’ amānim*)... come here!”¹¹³

The traditional interpretation reads here *libittum*, “brickwork”, used as a synonym of “house”.¹¹⁴ But “seeing the eye of the brickwork”, parallel to “seeing the eye of Aššur”,¹¹⁵ even when the latter implies visiting the god’s temple, would be a very bold metaphor.¹¹⁶ Kouwenberg (*GOA* § 3.4.10 and 5.5.1.1) suggests that *li-BE-tum* is a compound of *ili+bētim*, “the god of the house”, which has lost its initial vowel. This is attractive, but creates a problem for text 2 where, if “your god” is not in apposition to Aššur, three gods are invoked and “your god” is distinguished from “your house god” (who is apparently the same as *libittum ša abišu* in 1). This would be the only time they are mentioned alongside each other. Is “your house god” here perhaps the same guardian spirit as in OB references to it (see § 2.5) and “your god” the family god of Innāya, Amurru?¹¹⁷ Or is “your god” in apposition or Aššur, who after all was the god of every Assyrian? This would allow the identification of “your house god” with “the god of (the house of) your father” and this seems more likely, but proof is lacking.

3.5. General observations on the gods invoked

The gods that occur in these references, always in letters, are a mixed lot. Some are well-known, others not and a few are rare. Of the well-known gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon, Ellil, Ninurta, Ea, Šamaš (only in the

112. *Pirikannū* are a type of Anatolian woolen textiles traded by Assyrians, which were cheaper and yielded less profit than the imported Mesopotamian products.

113. Two damaged and unclear references occur in 94/k 530:4 and 17 (letter to a woman, perhaps the writer’s sister; courtesy of G. Barjamovic), *matima li-be-ta-am⁵ ša a-bi-ki lá ga-ma-ar/wa-dí-a ki IGIA-šur lá ta-[x]*...¹⁷ ...*matima/[I]i-be-tí a-bi-kà [x (x)]x zi-tí-im/[ta’]-lá-qé*...

114. *Libittum*, “brickwork”, seems to occur in Adana 237B:11, (Š. knows) *mannum i-li-bi-tim ša Aššur/iddinanni*, “who gave me (silver) within the brickwork of Assur”.

115. “To see the eye of” (*ēn/ēnē PN amārum*) means “to pay a visit to”, “meeting face to face”. It is often used of Assyrians living in Kanesh, who visit their home-town to see their relatives and pay homage to the god Aššur.

116. Even if we assume that the “brickwork” also refers to the tombs of the ancestors, buried underneath the house.

117. Lines 30-31 of text 2. mention a linen garment and a belt sent to Assur –by Innāya– as votive gift for Amurru.

atypical C1), Sîn, and several others are absent, just like Dagan (attested in several OA personal names), while Adad and Ištar occur only three times. Well-attested are Amurru, Ilabrat and Ištar-ZA.AT, while Ištar *kakkubum* and Nisaba occur each three times. Only once we meet Išartum, Wēr and Šarra-mātān, and we have one reference each for “the god of men” (*il šābim*), “the god of Kaneš” and “the *pirikkum* of Aššur”.

There are more than thirty references to “the god of my/your/our/their father” (including three times “the gods of our fathers”), nearly half of which add the name of the god so designated.¹¹⁸ There are about forty references to “my/your/our/their god” (not including the cases where the ruler promises to pray before “my god”), where in only seven cases his name is added.

	<i>my (etc.) god</i>	<i>god of my (etc.) father</i>	<i>the name only</i>	<i>praying before</i>	<i>ikribū</i>
Adad	1x ²	1x	2x	1x	+
Amurru	3x	5x	10x	1x	+
Ilabrat	1x	2x	7x	-	+
Išartum	-	1x	-	-	-
Ištar	1x	-	3x	1x	+
(Ištar) Aššurītum	-	-	2x	-	-
Ištar <i>kakkubum</i>	1x	1x	1x	1x	+
Ištar-ZA.AT	1x	3x	7x	1x	-
Nisaba 3x	1x	-	-	-	-
Šarra-mātān	1x	-	-	-	+
Wēr	-	-	1x	-	-
<i>ilū ummiānē</i>	-	-	2x	-	-
<i>ilū ebaruttim</i>	-	-	4x	-	-
<i>ilū ahhuttim</i>	-	-	3x	-	-
<i>ilum/ilū</i>	40x	20x	passim	8x	-
<i>eṭal/emmū</i>	-	6x	1x	-	-

The “spirit(s)” of the father, i.e. his ancestors, are mentioned six times, five of them in one particular file (Kt 93/k; see B2 and B3), letters exchanged between a trader and his sister in Assur, in all cases to stress the honesty and reliability of the writers. The last column mentions the “votive gifts” (*ikribū*) of the gods, which implies that they were venerated and suggests that these gods had a temple or shrine where the *ikribū* were kept and by which the funds they embodied were somehow invested in the trade. We frequently read about merchandise which is *ikribū*, although in many cases without stating to which god it belonged. Much is still unclear, also because there is not a single contract by which such *ikribū* or merchandise are entrusted to a trader, with clauses about how and when he had to pay back.¹¹⁹

The frequency of the gods invoked as “family gods” can be compared with that of their occurrences in theophoric personal names, but there was a great freedom in choosing names, and no rule that personal names

118. The designation *Il’aba*, known from the OB period and attested at Mari (in the name *Il’aba-taklāku*; ARM 23, 351 records oil, used for bathing Dagan, *Il’aba* and *Mārat-iltim*), which Durand (2008, 181) calls “une incarnation du culte familial”, does not occur in OA sources.

119. See Derksen (1997: 89 and 95-97), for *ikribū* and merchandise said to belong to a god, and for some additions below § 3.6. Several gods, attested as owners of *ikribū* and merchandise, such as Bēlum, Išhara, Ninkarrak, Suen, Šamaš and Tasmētum, do not figure in the invocations. See for the sun discs vowed to the gods now C. Michel, *Les médaillons dans la documentation paléo-assyrienne: des bijoux pour les dieux*, in J. Patrier - Ph. Quenet - P. Butterlin, *Mille et une empreintes. Un Alsacien en Orient. Mélanges en l’honneur du 65^e anniversaire de Dominique Beyer* (Subartu 36; Turnhout 2016) 319-329. We also meet references to amounts of silver simply qualified as “of DN”, e.g. AKT 7, 152:9, $\frac{1}{2}$ *mana ša* ^dUTU, 159:11, 10 GÍN *ša* INANA (after 10 GÍN *ikribū ša Bēlim*).

should include the name of the “family god”.¹²⁰ Moreover, while the number of different names reveals a god’s many qualities, it is more important to assess his popularity from the number of different people that were given a name in which he figures. Unfortunately, we can only give global figures, since there were many namesakes, and patronyms are often lacking in the sources. The two gods that, apart from Aššur, appear most frequently in personal names, Suen and Šamaš, do not appear in invocations, and Adad, part of ca. 35 different names and invoked as second god in the blessings and curses of Erišum I (C3) occurs only three times. Ellil and Ea, each attested in at least a dozen different names, never occur. *Ilabrat*/NIN.ŠUBUR, in Babylonia the well-known and popular vizier of the sun god, but in OA apparently an independent deity, is only attested in three personal names (*Ilabrat-bāni*, *Ilabrat-dunnī* and *Šu-Ilabrat*),¹²¹ but is invoked nine times. The same is true of Amurru, invoked or mentioned eighteen times, but only used in three personal names, of which Amurru-bāni is the most frequent one, attested for at least ten different persons.¹²² The frequency of the other gods is too low to be statistically relevant, but it is clear that they were not “popular”.

These statistics must be used with care, because of the sixty occurrences of an anonymous “my/your/our god” or “the god of my/your/our father(s)”.¹²³ Moreover, since the gods invoked usually are those venerated by a particular family, much depends on the discovery and publication of family archives. We can only identify a family god if we have enough letters addressed to the archive owner and his family (mentioning “your god”), together with some copies of letters he himself sent off (where he used “my god”), and if some of the occurrences happen to reveal the name of the god. This may explain why some gods occur only rarely or thus far are even missing.

An example of a god thus far not attested in an invocation is *Tašmētum*, to whom the well-known trader Pūšu-kēn promised a votive gift (TC 3, 35:15-17),¹²⁴ to whom Akatiya, the sister of the trader Ušur-ša-Ištar, addressed a letter,¹²⁵ and who is invoked in the blessing of two somewhat younger letters, sent by a woman in Assur to her sister in Sippar.¹²⁶ When the just-mentioned Ušur-ša-Ištar in AKT 2, 40:13-14 asks his sister “to pray for him before Aššur and your god” (above, B1A, 4c), he could mean *Tašmētum*, in whose service Akatiya may have been,¹²⁷ but we have no hard proof. Also missing is *Išhara*, who owned *ikribū*, received precious gifts (silver and two bull figurines, *rimū*, together with Ištar, according to TC 3, 106:6), and had a temple Kanesh to

120. Some families there named the oldest son after his grandfather, but this was more often not the case, also not in the family of the ruler. See for the Old Babylonian period and the extent to which “family gods” feature in the names of its members, M. Stol in *SEL* 8 (above note 4).

121. In Mari (see Durand 2008: 247) she occurs in personal names, e.g. in Šāt-Ilabra, where her name is written with the ending -a instead of -at.

122. It is tempting to link the popularity of this name, “Amurru is the one who creates (offspring?)”, with the god’s role as “family god”, since in Old Babylonian letters the personal/family god is repeatedly designated as the one who created the addressee (see above § 2.2). But one has to realize that -bāni is a very frequent predicate, added to the names of nearly all gods (also in Ili-bāni, “My god is the creator”, attested for ca. 25 different persons).

123. This applies in particular to promises by women that they will pray before their god. This god can be the god whom they serve as priestess, but if they are unmarried daughters or married women, this god probably is the god of their father or husband.

124. His wife in Assur writes him: “As for the votive gift your promised to *Tašmētum* (*ikribam ša ana Tašmētim takrubuni*), please do not forget it! The obligation has now become very serious (*i’iltum irtibi*), bring it personally or send it here with the first caravan!” A gift to her is also mentioned in AKT 6, 1054:1-2, “1½ shekel of silver, *Tašmētum*”.

125. Edited by G. Kryszat, Ein altassyrischer Brief an die Göttin *Tašmētum*, in *Fs. Kienast* (AOAT 274, 2001), 251-258, who also listed her occurrences, to which I can add the name Šāt-*Tašmētim* (AKT 8, 263:1). The goddess appears alone, since Nabium, her husband in Babylonia, is not attested in ancient Assur; see Meinhold (2009: 80).

126. *AbB* 7, 129 and 12, 60, invoke the blessing of Ištar and *Tašmētum*, and the second letter states that the writer constantly prays for her sister before these two goddesses. Meinhold suggests that *Tašmētum* may have been associated with the Aššur temple (“der Kreis um Aššur”).

127. She was (still?) unmarried, and therefore “her god” should have been the family god of her father, unless she was attached to the cult or temple of a particular god, who was now “her god”.

which “one went up”.¹²⁸ She also figures in some personal names, such as Ummī-Išhara, “I. is my mother”, the name of a daughter of a well-known trader, who was a priestess in Assur,¹²⁹ but she is (thus far) not invoked.¹³⁰

Invocations of the gods usually occur in personal letters that deal with conflicts and commercial problems and express frustration, irritation, mistrust, grief or reproach. Their presence varies per correspondence, for some writers were more prone to express their emotions than others, who seem to have restrained themselves and/or were spared such crises. They occur in the archive of Aššur-nādā, son of Aššur-idī (whose family god was Ilabrat; see below), according to Larsen an “exceedingly excitable” and “sour old man”.¹³¹ But the correspondence of Elamma, which I have edited in AKT 8 contains almost no utterance of the type collected here, and they are also largely absent in the large archive of Ali-ahum, excavated in 1950 (Kt c/k), as Dercksen tells me. Nearly all references to the “ghosts (of the ancestors) of our father” (*eṭammū ša abinī*) occur, as mentioned above, in one particular correspondence (communicated in Michel 2008b), presumably because the issue is a potential catastrophe of their paternal house, where the ancestors were buried.¹³² It is clear that the discovery or edition of new family archives and texts that pierce the anonymity of “my/your god” could change the picture.

3.6. Remarks on particular gods

3.6.1. Aššur

The position of Aššur, the “national god”, is exceptional.¹³³ He occurs most frequently and always comes first when several gods are mentioned; oaths are always sworn by his dagger (*patrum*). He most probably is meant when one simply writes “God may know!” (A1), always without possessive suffix and similar to “Aššur may know!” The “national god” apparently could not be claimed as the god of a particular family, but he was of course at the same time the god, “the lord” of every Assyrian, he is “Aššur, your lord” (n/k 650, see A2, 5f). Only women who were his priestesses could designate him as “my god”, e.g. in AKT 4, 63:14-15, a letter of Šīmat-Aššur, “I will pray for you before Aššur, my god” (above A4, 4a).¹³⁴ No spouse of Aššur is attested during the OA period and Ištar and her local manifestation, “Ištar of (the city of) Aššur”, are independent goddesses (see below).¹³⁵ The rulers of the city also had their own, dynastic god, and in their letters they promise “I will pray for you before Aššur and before my god” (see above B1A, 4a). This god would have remained anonymous if Erišum I had not identified him in two inscriptions as Bēlum (see above, B2, 5a), but his name, “Lord”, tells

128. See Dercksen (1997, 96) and UAR 48²³⁷⁻²³⁸.

129. See for her UAR 19b with Nachträge 13f., and Meinhold (2009: 69). TC 3, 106:3-9 records that 2 shekels of silver were brought to Assur “for Ištar and Išhara (and) two (figurines of) bulls (*rīmū*) and a cup for Išhara”.

130. The data on her were presented by R. Kuzuoğlu in *ArAn* 10: 29-54. Kt 94/k 432 (courtesy of G. Barjamovic) lists small payments on special occasions, including some silver *ana e-ZA-DIM ša mahar Išhara* (lines 5-6, meaning unclear) and *ana kà-šī-im ša Išhara* (lines 19-20). Unclear is also 88/k 697, where silver was paid to somebody *inūmi Išhara ina bētišu ú-<šé>-šī-bu-ni a-ni-qī-šu* (emendation proposed by Kuzuoğlu). The statement in a judiciary decision (n/k 391:1-2, courtesy Günbatti), *itamma Talhatium² ina Išhara*, “the man of Talhat shall swear by Išhara”, is of a different kind and Talhat was a town in the Northern Jazira, so that we cannot be sure which Išhara this was.

131. M.T. Larsen, Affect and Emotion, in W.H. van Soldt *et al.* (eds.), *Fs. K.R. Veenhof*, 275-286, points out that in the Old Assyrian commercial society “display of wrath and other negative emotions was not really acceptable behaviour”, and that letter-writers, striving for a “gentlemanly behaviour”, kept such feelings largely unexpressed. But there were exceptions, when people spoke their mind, in particular in letters exchanged between “members of the same close family unit” and he also observes that emotional statements are more frequent in letters exchanged with women. Both categories of letters are therefore not by accident well represented in my sample.

132. An additional reference perhaps in AKT 7, 209:8-10, 5/6 mina of silver [*iš²*]-tū e-ṭá-me¹⁰ [*ú*]-sá-az-ki-ru-ni-ni, “after they had made me invoke the ghosts”.

133. See for him also the observations of Garelli, *La religion de l’Assyrie ancienne*, RA 56: esp. 200-203.

134. See for KTS 2, 52 (= *Immāya* II no. 65):13-15, adduced as proof of Aššur as personal/family god in *Family Religion* 86, above note 107 (read A-šūr/ū MAR.TU *il₅-kà*). In KTK 18:y+11, mentioned in UAR, Nachträge 7 zu S. 8, as a rare case of Aššur *ilki* (ū *abinī*), we probably have to read Aššur ū¹ il₅ É¹ *abinī* (see above B1B, 1a); the same text in l. y+19 has Aššur ū DINGIR *abinī* (B1, 1b, 5b). When the writer of Ka 423:18-20 (B2, 1a) writes Aššur *ilikunu u ili abia*, *ilikunu* is not in apposition to Aššur, for he invokes three gods, the last two the family gods of two different families.

135. See W. Meinhold, *Die Familie des Gottes Aššur*, in *CRRAI* 55, 141-149.

us nothing of his special character, and Assyrian citizens did not invoke him.¹³⁶ He may well occur in personal names, but since the title *bēlum*, and especially *bēlī*, “my lord”, may apply to various deities,¹³⁷ it is not certain how often he was meant; Bēlum-mušallim, Bēlum-bāni, Išar-Bēlum and ^dBēlum-rabi (kt 86/k 167:4, written with the divine determinative) are serious candidates. He also occurs as owner of votive gifts (*ikribū*)¹³⁸ and KTB 13:4 (see above C2) mentions the sacrifice of sheep for “Aššur, Bēlum and our god”.

3.6.2. *Ištar*

The position of Ištar is comparable to that of Aššur. She was the dominant goddess of the city, venerated in an important, old temple, rebuilt (phase D) during the reign of Ilušuma, and to all appearances identical to *Ištar Aššurītum*, “Ishtar of the city of Assur”.¹³⁹ Her name is part of a large number of different personal names, of men and women. While men had to swear by Aššur’s dagger, women had to do so by her *huppum*, presumably a little drum or tambourine.¹⁴⁰ Since such an oath implied that the goddess would punish the perjurer, it does not surprise that the letter TC 3, 93 (OAA 1, 14; see B1D, 5) mentions that Aššur and Aššurītum together warned and punished its addressee, because he had not sent the votive gifts promised (see below). Ištar appears only three times in my list; one prays to her together with Ishtar-ZA.AT (B3, 4a), she is invoked as witness (together with Šarra-mātān, a unique combination; B3, 2a), and we read that “Ištar, his god” is expected to protect somebody (A4, 5b) and if this reading is correct (see above note 102), she would be the god of the trader Kura. Another letter mentions that she punishes somebody, “treats him badly” (A6) and a recently published one, Kt ck. 18,¹⁴¹ acquaints us with Šu-Ištar, a priest of Ishtar in Kanesh, whose house harbored a shrine with a statue of the goddess and her jewelry or treasure (*šukuttum*). She must have been Ištar of Aššur, since the cultic presence in *kārum* Kanesh of the main Assyrian goddess, by whose *huppum* women had to swear, seems natural, although the nisbe *Aššurītum* is not added to her name in the file dealing with Šu-Ištar’s shrine.¹⁴² Ištar would be attested much more frequently if Ištar-ZA.AT and Ištar Star (*kakkubum*) would refer to her, but that is not the case. For in ICK 1, 28b (B3, 4a), a woman prays to her and to Ištar-ZA.AT,¹⁴³ and “Ištar the Star” seems to be a separate, astral manifestation of Ištar, presumably Venus, in Babylonia called *Ištar kakkabī*, “Ištar of the stars”.¹⁴⁴ OA texts in fact acquaint us with still other manifestations of Ishtar of which we know nothing, for 94/k 1296:8-11 mentions votive gifts (*ikribū*) owed to *Ištar Aššurītum Qá-at-ni-tim ù Dī-mi-tim*, that is also to Ishtars venerated at Qatna and the little-known Babylonian town of Dim.¹⁴⁵

136. Bēlum also features in the list of oath gods in the treaty between Assur and the king of Apūm, I:8, [^dB]e-lam₅ a-šur-ri-a, “Bēlum of Aššur” (Edem 2011, 417 l. 8, with G. Kryszat in Zur Liste der Schwurgötter im Assur-Apūm-Vertrage, *Isimu* VI (2007) 99-102). The mention of “1½ shekel of silver *ana Bēlim*” in AKT 7, 271a:24 (^dBēlim in the duplicate 87/392:26; cf. I ½ GÍN DIRI ša Be-lim in 87/k 475:6) occurs in a text that deals with payments etc. in Kanesh.

137. E.g. in Bēlī-ṭab, Libūr-bēlī and Šalim-bēlī; the third name could also be given to slaves.

138. See Dercksen (1997: 9). They consist of gold, silver and copper and we can now add AKT 6, 1060:7 and AKT 7, 159:10. Prag I 631:8 mentions a “fund” (*taphurum*) of Bēlum and BIN 6, 144:1-2, “shareholders” (? *admitum*) of Bēlum, who travel overland with silver.

139. Meinhold (2009: 51ff). She is mentioned in an inscription written on a votive pubic triangle from the time of Sargon I of Assur (*RIMA* 1, 46, no. 2001:4-5) and on a similar object (Assur 19624a/VA 8365), dedicated to her, “her mistress”, by the *gubabtum*-priestess Ab-šalim (see G. Kryszat, *NABU* 2017/66). 94/k 1296:8-10 (courtesy of Larsen) records *ikribū* owed to her. Contrary to *UAR* 22, with Nachträge 13a, Aššurītum does not occur in invocations, but she is listed among the gods adjured by the ruler of Apūm in the text of the treaty with Assur (Edem 2011: 417 l. 11).

140. See Michel (1997:117-120); new occurrences in 86/k 155:13-14 = AKT 8, 210bis, and in c/k 197:45, in damaged context (courtesy J.G. Dercksen).

141. J.G. Dercksen, “The Goddess who was Robbed of her Jewellery. Ishtar and her Priest in an Assyrian Colony”, *Anatolica* 41: 37-59.

142. A unique reference is in 88/k 71:61 (see J.G. Dercksen, *AoF* 35: 97-99). At the end of a long list of expenses made by the writer to wine and dine his father-in-law during the preparation for a wedding of his sister, we read “our sister shaved her head for Ishtar” (*qaqqassa ana Ištar taglub*), but its meaning is not clear.

143. Meinhold assumed that she “vermutlich zum göttlichen Gefolge Ištar gehörte” and may also have been venerated in the temple of Ištar of phase D.

144. Meinhold (2009: 66) suggests “eine gewisse Nähe zum Gott Amurru”, but the evidence is weak.

145. Communicated in *AoF* 35: 152, with note 28, and to be published as AKT 6/5 no. 1083 (courtesy of M.T. Larsen).

3.6.3. Amurrum

Amurrum is best known as the family god of Innāya, son of Elālī, as pointed out by C. Michel in *Innāya* (I, 86.) and later by Kryszat (2006a). Innāya himself mentions him twice as “the god of my father” and people who write to him use “Amurrum, your god”, once simply “Amurrum”, and several times simply “your god” (CCT 4, 14b:8; TC 1, 20:46). Innāya’s wife in CCT 3, 25:27-28 mentions that he had sent to Assur a linen garment and a belt for Amurrum, apparently a votive gift. In TPAK (1, 58), a nephew and son of Innāya ask the latter’s brother to pray “before Aššur and Amurrum”. Why in BIN (6, 97:20), Innāya’s brother writes “your god” and not “our god” is not clear. Amurrum is also invoked in AKT 1, 17:39-40, a letter of Aššur-nādā to Ennam-Aššur and Šumi-abiya: “Aššur and Amurrum, the god (not: gods!) of our father may know that...” (B1C, 2a). The words “the god of *our* father” imply that writer and addressees shared the same family god, which shows that the writer is not Aššur-nādā, son of Aššur-idī, whose family god was Ilabrat (see below). Larsen included the letter in his OAA 1 but admitted that the persons mentioned “are not all among the close associates of Aššur-nādā”. Unfortunately, their names are too common, and without patronymics it is impossible to identify them.

3.6.4. Ilabrat

Ilabrat (NIN.ŠUBUR) was the god of Aššur-idī and his son Aššur-nādā, whose archive has been reconstructed and edited by Larsen in OAA 1 (in what follows I use the text numbers in his edition). The father does not invoke the god, but his son and grandson Iddin-Ištar do, the former in 48:17-18 (B1D, 1a) and the latter in 116:5 and 14 (B1C and B1A, 3c), calling him “the god of our father” and “your god”. In 117: 9-11 (A3, 4c) he asks his father to bring a sacrifice and pray for him “before your god”.

Larsen (p. XXIV) mentions the emotional letters in which the father urges his son “to listen to the words of the gods” and reproaches him for having angered them by repeatedly breaking his promises and “speaking wickedness in his heart”, for which Aššur and Aššurītum have “hit him with their weapon” (14:5-6 and 17-20, see B1D, 5). The gods are angry because of votive offerings (*ikribū*) and Aššur-idī’s letters 19-21 mention as such golden sun disks for Aššur and Ilabrat (to be made in Kanesh)¹⁴⁶ and silver for Ištar. The father, who had promised them, “owes” them (20:15, 21:5, *habbulāku*), but according to 20:22-23 he had done so in the name of his son (*aššumika*), who had to bring or send them to Assur. The anger of the god(s) “because of your journey” (19:26-27; 20:6-8), their “harsh words” and “the decision taken about you”¹⁴⁷ apparently are due to his repeated failure (“five yea six times”, 14:3-4, 34:25-26) to deliver them. He used the silver he earned for his business and ignored his obligation to the gods, whereby (15:17-20) “you keep doing what the god does not allow and make your sin ever heavier”.¹⁴⁸ In this context, we find repeated references to “the god” (singular), such as “the god does not allow”, “the god is full of anger”, “you made a promise to the god”, etc.¹⁴⁹ This could be Aššur, for whom the main votive gift was meant and who warned him (together with Ištar of Assur), according to 14:5-6 and 17-18 (B1D), but it might also be the family god Ilabrat, who also did not get what was promised (20:22-23). If so, the passages would show that trader’s family god did not only take care of his client, but could also get angry, warn, and punish him.

146. See for such votive disks Michel, “Les médailles” (above note 119).

147. We do not know what it implied, but note that 20:30 states that the silver to be sent “will serve as a substitute for your life”.

148. Aššur-nādā apparently did not have enough silver to meet his promise (20:10), a failure his father qualifies as “withholding my *ikribū*” (21:20). A complication is that *ikribū* may also designate investments (derived from votive gifts), entrusted to traders by temples (see above note 119). That the family disposed of such *ikribū* is also clear from OAA 1, 167, a large account of textiles (property of Aššur-idī and his two sons), among which textiles called *ikribū* of Aššur and Ištar. Failure to give the *ikribū* promised angers the gods and is the cause of misfortune, as is stated clearly in the emotional letter n/k 1192:20-22 and 35-37 (*ArAn* 4 [1996] 170-72), “Save my paternal house, myself and the ghosts (*eṭammū*) of my father; because of the *ikribū* of Aššur my paternal house is ruined... If you refuse this Aššur, the lord of the *ikribū*, will surely know!”

149. “What the god does not allow”, 15:18; “the words of the god are urgent”, 16:3-4; “the god is full of anger”, 19:26-27 and 20:7-8; “the decision the god made for/about you”, 34: 28. In this last letter we also twice have the plural in “the words of the gods” (DINGIR.HIA, lines 24 and 32) and (for that reason?) Larsen translates DINGIR in 15:18 and 16:4 also as plural, “gods” (as collective?).

Ilabrat was also the god of the family of Aššur-taklāku and his sister Tariša, and consequently of their father Ali-ahum, son of Iddin-Suen. C. Michel, who will edit their archive (Kt 93/k), has already published data from letters exchanged between brother and sister after the death of their father, when the “the house of our father” faced serious problems.¹⁵⁰ Tariša in 198 invokes “Aššur, our god (*ilini*) Ilabrat and the ghosts of our father”, while her brother reacts in 527 by calling upon “the god of our father (DINGIR-*lu abini*) and the ghosts of our father” as witnesses, and in 530 refers to “Aššur, your god (DINGIR-*ki*) and the ghosts of our father” (see the quotes in B2). This last reference is surprising, because one would expect “our god” (used by Tariša herself). It might be the god whose service Tariša had entered as priestess, but there is no evidence for such a status, nor that she had married, in which case “her god” would be the god of the family of her husband. Another observation to be made here is that their father Ali-ahum was the brother of Elamma, the owner of the archive published as AKT 8. It therefore seems likely that Ilabrat was also the god of Elamma and his family, but there are no invocations in the letters in his archive to prove it.

The family of Šalim-ahum most probably also venerated Ilabrat as family god, since in letters to his sons he twice invokes Aššur and Ilabrat to be witnesses (AKT 3, 67 and 71) and does the same in a letter to Pūšu-kēn and Ilabrat-bāni (POAT 7; all references above, in B1D under Ilabrat), although he does not qualify him as “my/our god”. Another trader whose family god probably was Ilabrat is Iddin-Ištar, who in a letter to his investors (Kayseri 275:15-16) invokes “Assur and Ilabrat” (see above B1A, 1a). Although we have more textual evidence on him and his financial problems,¹⁵¹ I am unable to identify his family because the name of his father is not mentioned.

3.6.5. *Ištar-ZA.AT*

This goddess appears most often in “dem Umfeld der Familie des bekannten Kaufmannes Imdīlum” (son of Šu-Labān), to quote Kryszat (2006b), who presented and discussed the evidence.¹⁵² This “Umfeld” comprises not only Imdī-ilum’s own archive,¹⁵³ but also the very large one of Kt n/k, belonging to Ušur-ša-Ištar, son of Aššur-imittī, Imdī-ilum’s uncle. Most letters of this archive simply mention Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, but Imdī-ilum’s uncle Amur-Ištar in a letter to him (BIN 6, 39; B1C) invokes “Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, your god”, while his daughter Ištar-bāštī promises to pray for her father “before Ištar and Ištar-ZA.AT” (ICK 1, 28B; B1C). Evidence for Ištar-ZA.AT’s status is found in n/k 109 (a letter to Huniya) and n/k 283 (a letter to Ikuppiya; both courtesy S. Bayram), where Ušur-ša-Ištar invokes “Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, the god of my father” (B1C), while in n/k 1456 (A4, A5) he reminds Ikuppiya of “the words I spoke to you before Ištar-ZA.AT, the god of my father”. We have no letters with such statements from his father Aššur-imittī, Imdī-ilum’s paternal uncle, “a very influential man in Assur” (Larsen), but the writer of a letter to him (n/k 1340; B1D) invokes Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT as witnesses. Kryszat designates Aššur-imittī as “Familienoberhaupt”, which is possible if he had succeeded his father Amur-ilī as *pater familias*. If Ištar-ZA.AT is the god of this large family, we do not understand why Imdī-ilum’s uncle Amur-Ištar in BIN (6, 39) writes “Ištar-ZA.AT, your god” and not “our god”.¹⁵⁴

150. See Michel (2015: 90-91). In KTK 18, written to his sister ^fTariša, Aššur-taklāku also deals with the problems of “our paternal house” and in lines 11’ and 19’ twice invokes “Aššur and the god of our father” to be witness (see B1B, 1a).

151. See M.T. Larsen in *CTMMA* p. 120, comment on text 84, where he is called Ennam-Aššur’s *tanākārum*. We can now add Prag I 428 (with introductory remarks on him) and 530.

152. Kryszat mentioned the existence of four additional references in unpublished texts from this archive (Kt n/k 109, 110, 283 and 1456), whose data are presented here; I have read and studied these texts with my Turkish colleagues, when they carried out research at Leiden.

153. A first edition of the texts known by then (partly from excavations by B. Hrozný in 1925) was M. Ichisar, *Les archives cappadocienne du marchand Imdilum* (Recherche sur les grandes civilisations, cahier no. 3; Paris 1981). The archive and its owner were studied around the same time by M.T. Larsen, Your money or your life! A portrait of an Assyrian Businessman, in J.N. Postgate (ed.), *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honour of I.M. Diakonoff* (Warminster 1982) 214-245 (family tree on p. 219).

154. When AKT 2, 33 (n/k 557):19-20 says to Ušur-ša-Ištar and Mannu-kī-Aššur “may Aššur and *i-lu-ku-nu* be witnesses” and its writer means “your gods”, Mannu-kī-Aššur was from a different family. If he meant “your god” we have to assume that he belonged to the same family as Ušur-ša-Ištar. Several letters addressed to him were indeed found in the latter’s archive, but we cannot fit him into the family genealogy.

3.6.6. *Ištar kakkubum*, “Ištar Star”

In AKT 6, 526:15-16 (A4) Idnaya writes to Adida and Ali-ahum: “I will pray before Ištar Star, our god” (*i-li-ni*). If “our” meant the god of all three of them, he would have belonged to the (wider) family of Ali-ahum, son of Šallim-Aššur, to which then also Adida, the son of Warad-ilišu, who “often appears together with Ali-ahum as sender or recipient of letters” (Larsen) would have belonged. But the evidence is lacking, also on a family relationship between Idnaya and Adida, so that it seems safer to assume that Idnaya’s “our god” refers to his own family, although the question remains why in that case he did not write “my god”. Ištar Star also features in BIN (6, 55:5), where Pūšu-kēn quotes the wish of his addressee Amur-Ištar that “Aššur and Ištar Star be witnesses”. Since there is no evidence that Amur-Ištar (we know at least twenty different persons with that name, but this one probably is the well-known representative and partner of Pūšu-kēn)¹⁵⁵ belonged to Pūšu-kēn’s family, the suggestion of Kryszat (2006b, 55), that “Ištar Star” was their family god, and was meant when letters addressed to Pūšu-kēn mention “your god,”¹⁵⁶ lacks proof. Ištar Star could as well be the god of Amur-Ištar’s family.¹⁵⁷

3.6.7. *Adad*

Adad, apparently the most important god of the city after Aššur,¹⁵⁸ features three times in my data. In AKT 6, 792 (B1C) a certain Šu-Bēlum, son of Kuzizia, promises Ali-ahum (of the Šallim-Aššur family) that he will “pray for him before Aššur and Adad, the god of our father” (*ili abini*). Although we have no evidence that Šu-Bēlum was a member of the family, his use of *ili abini* suggests a shared family god, which would imply that Adad figured as such already before the time of Šallim-Aššur’s father. In AKT 7, 258:22 (B1D, Adad), in a letter to Aššur-rē’ī, Ali-ahum’s brother Ennam-Aššur invokes Aššur and Adad as witnesses, and, in l. 31-32, mentions “1 mina of silver for Aššur and your god...” (what follows is broken). This suggests the identification of Aššur-rē’ī’s god with Adad, unless he invokes him as one of the two main gods of the city,¹⁵⁹ just like in the OB period persons might invoke or pray to the two main gods, Šamaš and Marduk. Although the occurrences of Adad are few, the god occurs in many names that express a trust in and a personal relationship with him, which seems to qualify him as the god of several families.¹⁶⁰ Note that Šala, his spouse in the OB period, is not attested in early

155. He might be the son of Amur-ilī, an important man, legal representative and partner of Pūšu-kēn, discussed in *OACC* 100-101 and 145-146.

156. POAT 33:14, written by Iddin-Kūbum, mentioned by Kryszat; one may add *JCS* 14: 6 no. 4:34, where Kulumāya does the same. When Šalim-ahum in a letter addressed to Pūšu-kēn (POAT 7:37-38) invokes Aššur and Ilabrat as witnesses he probably means his own family god, see above § 3.6.4. That Pūšu-kēn’s wife and daughter remind him in TC 3, 35:15-17 of the votive gift he had promised to the goddess Tašmētum does not prove that she was their family god. When Pūšu-kēn’s two(?) sisters in KTS 24 and 25a tell him that because of withheld votive gifts “the god treats our paternal house/family badly” (*ilum lamniš bēt abini eppaš*), we do not know which god is meant, the one to whom the gifts had been promised, the god Aššur or the family god. When his wife asks Pūšu-kēn in CCT 3, 20:40, “come here... and grasp the feet of your god!” (made in connection with the dedication of his daughter to the god Aššur; see above A3, 5g), she most probably means their family god, not Aššur.

157. 50 shekels of gold, *ikribū* of Ištar Star, are mentioned in AKT 11, 163:1-4 (courtesy of H. Erol).

158. See for him *UAR* 2-4 and 49-51 and Schwemer (2001: 237-263). See for *ikribū* of Adad Dercksen (1997, 95), with c/k 50:33-35, “35 shekels of gold which A. sent here *ana ikribē ša Aššur u Adad illak*”, c/k 866:7-8, 21 *šubātū ikribū ša Aššur u Adad*, and the interesting text AKT IX, 113:8-14, whose writer states: “I sent 85 shekels of silver because of the *ikribū* of Adad out of my own funds to the City. I will take my principal (*šimī*) and the profit will go to the *ikribū* of Adad”. AKT 6, 1050:1-3 (whole text; courtesy Larsen) mentions: “At Adad’s order *mihhu*-beer and *sasqu*-flour”, apparently for cultic use.

159. Erišum in his building inscription invokes the curse and blessing of Aššur, Adad and Bēlum and according to *RIMA* 1: 36-37, no. 14, with Adad’s support he built (restored) Adad’s temple, as did Ikūnum later. According to c/k 127 Šimat-Aššur in Assur, on the occasion of the *tamrum*-ritual went to Adad’s temple to prostrate herself (see Dercksen, *KIM* 1, 54, 3.2.3). Hubītum, priest of Adad there, occurs in VS 26, 32:18-19, and Ennam-Aššur, a musician of him (*nuārūm ša Adad*), in ICK 1, 156:13-14. Several archival texts mention gold and silver owed to Adad (see *UAR* 2, I, A, 1), presumably as votive gifts or as refund for investments in the trade.

160. See for the OA names in which he occurs, Schwemer (2001: 238-242). Note especially the following that express a more personal relation with the name-bearer (or his parents): A.-*hussanni*, “A., remember me”; A.-*ilī*, “A. is my god”; A.-*rē’ī*, “A. is my shepherd”; A.-*rēš*, “A. is my helper”; A.-*šulūli*, “A. is my protection”; A.-*tappā’ī*, “A. is my companion”; A.-*tukultī*, “A. is my trust”; *Ibni*-A., “A. created (the child)”; *Itūr*-A., “A. turned back”; *Narām*-A., “Beloved of A.”; *Šāt*-/Šu-A., “The one of Adad”; *Tūram*-A., “Turn back to me, Adad”.

Assur, also not as part of a personal name, but Išartum (below no. 8) seems to belong to his “family”, according to later evidence as his daughter-in-law.

3.6.8. *Išartum, Wēr and Šarra-matān*

Three gods are thus far attested only once. *Išartum*, “Lady Fairness”, occurs a few times during the OB period. At Mari she features in line 12 of an early text (*Syria* 47 [1970] 247 l. 11), which precedes “the babylonization” (Durand) as ^d*e-šar-tum*(!) and under Zimrilim, in ARMT (23, 264:4), a text dealing with the cult at Terqa, she features after Dagan and before Yakrub-El, as recipient of two sheep, as she does in (23, 289:7), after Ninhursag.¹⁶¹ A text from the Sin-kašid palace in OB Uruk mentions a (sacred) orchard of her (^{giš}KIRI₆ *Išartim*) and she also occurs, as Marten Stol told me, in an OB year name in BM 26379, which mentions the construction of a “great dais/shrine” for her.¹⁶² In a younger Eršahunga to Adad she is asked, after Šala, “Adad’s beloved spouse”, to intercede, and in *An-Anum* 247 she follows Mišaru (qualified as Adad’s son) as ^d*Išartu dam.bi*, which identifies her Adad’s daughter-in-law. This status as member of Adad’s family may explain her veneration in ancient Assur.¹⁶³

Wēr is attested thus far only once, in a school letter (B1D), but he may be considered a “family god”, because most gods invoked in prayers and as witness after Aššur seem to figure as such. Considering the OA personal names in which he occurs, notably Ennam-Wēr, Puzur-Wēr, Wēr-rēšī, Wēr-bāni, Ušur-Wēr and Wēr-šamšī, it is not surprising to encounter him as family god. His spouse may have given her name to Assur’s “Wērtum Gate” (inscription of Ilušuma, *RIMA* 1, A.O.32.2:47).¹⁶⁴

Šarra-matān is a god whose identity is disputed. Several OA texts mention his *taphīrum* in Assur, which seems to denote a fund or treasury to which people may owe silver and there are votive gifts (*ikribū*) of him (in AKT 11, 113, 90 shekels of silver *ša ikribē ša Š. and Išhara*, they will divide it equally”). Kt ck 1079 (unpubl.), according to Balkan 1955, 71⁵⁰, would mention a temple of him in Kanesh, which is confirmed by 94/k 670:4, which lists a “cup that is in front of *Ša-ru-ma-tē-en*”, apparently before a statue of him in what seems to be a private chapel.¹⁶⁵ He occurs after Šamaš, Enlil and Adad in the curse section (where Aššur does not occur!) of Šamšī-Adad’s inscription commemorating the construction of the temple of Aššur/Enlil at Assur. He comes third in the list of gods by whom the city of Assur and the king of Apūm have to swear at the beginning of their treaty (Eidem 2011, 417, I:3). Derksen (*NABU* 2011/75) considered him a “double god,” because of the dual ending of his name, possibly related to the Hurro-Hittite god Šarrum(m)anni, which would explain their qualification as “my gods” in the invocation (see B3, 2a with note 111). Recently Kryszat¹⁶⁶ presented all occurrences, and argues for the meaning “King of two lands”, because of the occasional spelling with LUGAL- (at least once, alongside ten syllabic writings),¹⁶⁷ but which two lands are meant is not clear. I conclude that the meaning of his name and his identity remain unclear.

161. See for the data from Mari, Durand (2008: 241 no. 39.1, and 265). Commenting on the fact that ^d*Išar* replaces ^d*Kittum* Durand suggests that Išar could be an absolute state with omission of the feminine suffix, preserved in Išartum.

162. The text from OB Uruk in *BaM* 21: 191 (W 20472), the yearname is MU *a-lum BĀRA.GAL I-šar-tum* MU.DŪ, quoted in *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, III (London 2006), 103 no. 197.

163. See for *Išartum*, Schwemer (2001: 68, no. 247), who accepts Durand’s proposal to identify her with Išar, the absolute state of Išartum, already attested in Old Akkadian personal names. The *eršahunga* prayer is S. Maul, “*Herzberuhigungsklagen*” (Wiesbaden 1988), 148-158, n19-n20.

164. See for ^d*Wēr*, Schwemer (2001: 200-210). OBTI 27:4’-5’ mentions an agreement reached in the presence of “the lance (*šukurru*) of ^d*Wēr*”, and the writer of the letter *Sumer* 14: 71, no. 47 (from Tell Harmal) invokes the blessing of Šamaš and Wēr (Goetze, *ibidem* 11¹⁸ quotes IM 51458, mentioning a barley loan from “Wēr of Kakkulātum”).

165. See G. Barjamovic & M.T. Larsen, *AoF* 35: 153, where he occurs after “a chair which is in front of Aššur”.

166. G. Kryszat, Towards an Understanding of Old Assyrian *Šarra-mātā/en* and *Šarru-mātim*, in K. Kaniuth *et al.* (eds.), *Übergangszeiten. Altorientalische Studien für Reinhard Dittmann anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstags* (Marru 1) 2018, 195-205.

167. Five times *Ša-ra-* (also in n/k 429:16), three times *Šar-ra-*, once *Ša-ar-* and *Šar-*. The spelling with LUGAL- in I:3 of the treaty is not certain, because the end of the postulated LUGAL is different from that of LUGAL in I:9. LUGAL also occurs alongside *-ša-ru/i* in the spelling of *ziga(n)šarru*, the name of an unidentified object (see CAD Z 108), where it is not clear whether it stands for “king”, but a meaning “king” is assured in the personal name LUGAL-*Suen*, also spelled *Ša-ra-Suen*.

The occurrence of these fairly “obscure” gods as family gods implies that more little-known gods will in due time emerge as such.

3.7. Unidentified family gods

The occurrences of Amurrum, Ilabrat and Ištar-ZA.AT show that the god invoked in letters after Aššur in most cases was the family god, but when not qualified as “my/your god” or as “the god of my/our father,” doubt remains whether it was the god of the addressee or the writer. This is the case when Buzutaya in AKT 9, 11:11-13 (B1D) adjures Suen-nāwir by Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT to come in order to salvage the silver of his brother. The designation of Ištar-ZA.AT as “the god of *our* father” might imply that writer and addressee belonged to the same family and venerated the same family god. We have such a case in BIN (6, 119) (B1B, 2a), where Suejja writes to his brother Buzāzu and the reference is to the god of their father Pūšu-kēn. But when Išme-Aššur in a letter to Aššuriš-tikal in (AKT 8, 257 = B1B, 5c) invokes “Aššur and the gods of our fathers”, that is of members of different families, we do not know which gods were involved. This is also the case in Ka 423¹⁶⁸ (B2, 1a), a letter addressed by Innāya to Enna[...] and Puzur-Aššur, where “your^{plur} god (*ilikunu*) and the god of my father” distinguish Innāya’s family god (Amurrum) from the unknown god of (the family of) his two addressees (perhaps brothers). In CCT 2,6 (B2, 1a), addressed in particular to one Aššur-ṭāb, Imdī-ilum invokes as witnesses his own family god, Ištar-ZA.AT, and “the god of your father” (*ili abika*), whose identity remains unknown.

References to family gods are largely absent, as Dercksen tells me, in the large archive of Ali-ahum, son of Aššur-mālik, excavated in 1950 (Kt c/k). In c/k 284 and c/k 53 (B,1,a,1a) two different people writing to him invoke “Aššur and your god”, but the name of his god remains unknown. In the conflict between Aššur-idī and Iddin-Aššur, recorded in k/k 108 (A3, 5a), the former states that thanks to “the god of my father and the god of your father” (l. 27) he remained unharmed “in your house” when it was burglarized. The traders apparently belonged to different families, with different family gods, whose identity is unknown.¹⁶⁹ Ennam-Aššur in AKT 6, 287 (A3, 5d) is advised to keep imploring “before your god”, which should be the family god of his father Šallim-Aššur, but the archive does not reveal who that was. This is a pity, because the same letter asks him “to go down to the temple (house) of the god (*bēt ilim*) and to ask for mercy from the god (*išti ilim*)”. Is “the god” identical to “your god”, and if so did he have his own shrine, or was “the god” a different one (perhaps Aššur, who had a shrine in the *kārum* building), in whose cella one could also pray to (a statuette?) of one’s family god?¹⁷⁰

Identifying the family god in isolated texts from scattered archival texts is often impossible. Archives usually contain letters from different senders, including members of the family, and also copies of letters in which the archive owner himself may invoke his god or the one of his addressee, and their combination may allow identifications. But lack of patronyms makes this impossible in isolated letters, and the problem is compounded by our complete ignorance about when and why a god had become the god of a particular family. Cases where somebody writes about “the god of our father”, where we cannot establish a family relationship between writer and addressee, might become understandable if we knew more about the history of the family. Both could be descendants of the same grandfather, or an even earlier ancestor, but our archival sources do not cover these early generations (see Larsen’s remarks on the ancestors of Šallim-Aššur in AKT 6a, p. 6-7). Another pitfall is that when a person writes about “the god of our father”, he may refer to himself and his addressee as sharing the same family god, but in some cases “our father” refers only to his own family (as writers do when they mention “the house of our father”), since it was not his personal, but his family god. We therefore must be very cautious in suggesting identifications.

We have to realize that if the numerous families of Assyrian traders all venerated one particular god, a large number of gods must have been involved. It must include gods thus far known only by name, occasionally

168. A letter published in *Anatolica* 12: 152.

169. Iddin-Aššur writes that Aššur-idī lived in “the house of our father” (*ina bēt abini*, l. 6), which then does not mean the house of their joint father, but the house of their boss or the house of Iddin-Aššur’s family.

170. Another example of an unknown family god is in AKT 4, 69 (B1A, 5e and A3, 5c), where Šuli warns La-qēpum “not to... with Aššur and my god” and assures him that “my god will call you to account” (*liš’alka*).

because a priest of them figures in an economic text (as witness),¹⁷¹ from a single text (such as Išartum), or because they are mentioned as owners of votive gifts (*ikribū*). The number of the latter has substantially increased since their collection and listing in Dercksen (1997). New names (apart from the gods discussed above in § 3.6) are: Anna, Annunītum, Ea, ⁴KAL *ša tarādīm*, Lamassum, Mišurum, Pabilšan, and Suen.¹⁷² In addition there must have been gods that simply are not (yet) attested in our sources, or are only known as theophoric element in personal names. Several gods of Assur –e.g. Bēlum, Aššurītum, Ištar Aššurītum– are also mentioned in the adjuration at the beginning of the treaty between Apūm and Assur (Eidem 2011, 417), but it is not clear whether Ninkarrak and Išhara are the gods of Apūm and/or those of Assur, or to put it differently (with treaty text I:20-21), which are the gods of Amurru and which those of Šubarum. Many of the anonymous gods referred to in names as “my god” may have been family gods.¹⁷³ Notwithstanding the many references to “votive gifts” (*ikribū*) of a variety of gods, and the existence of a few texts describing small shrines,¹⁷⁴ our knowledge of the Old Assyrian cults and the “religious map” of Assur is very limited. And while we should not underestimate the number of gods venerated in Assur, their number and the available data on identified “family gods” imply that several different families must have venerated the same god as “family god”, as we could establish for Amurru and Ilabrat.

3.8. *Praying for somebody before a god*

The references to praying for somebody before a god (*ana PN mahar DN karābum*, element 4) in the listing in § 3.2. require a closer look. I have counted nearly thirty such promises and statements. The prayers are to be made seven times before Aššur alone, once before him and a named “family god” (Adad, B3C), eight times before Aššur and an anonymous family god (five of which are promises by the ruler to pray “before Aššur and my god”, whom we know to be Bēlum), eight times before a family god alone (“my god/your god/the god of his father”; B3), once before “Ištar Star, our god” (A4, 4a). Twice prayers are made before Aššur and another god, most probably a family god, although not qualified as such: “before Aššur and Amurru” (B1D, 4c) and “before Aššur and Nisaba” (B1D, 4a).¹⁷⁵ There is one case of a prayer before Ištar and Ištar-ZA.AT” (B3, 4a). Disregarding the special case of the ruler, who had a close connection with him, the preponderance of Aššur is remarkable, but occasionally explainable. AAA 1, 6 is an official letter, where an Anatolian ruler is told that the authorities of *kārum* Kanesh will pray for him to Aššur if he meets their request, and in c/k 228 the promise immediately follows remarks on a lot of “tin that is *ikribū* of Aššur”. In at least two cases, the writers are women and one of them, Šimat-Aššur (in AKT 4, 63), writes to her brother (?) that she will pray for him “before Aššur, my god” (*mahar Aššur ilia*), a unique qualification, which suggests that she was a priestess of Aššur (to which her name may bear witness). That in five other cases prayers are addressed to Aššur alongside a family god suggests that the favor of the national god was considered important.¹⁷⁶ One may have deemed his power bigger than that of the “family gods”, but intercessory prayers “before my/your god” and before other named family gods (Adad, Ištar Star and Ištar-ZA.AT, probably also Amurru and Nisaba, although not qualified as such) are not rare.¹⁷⁷

Some texts mention that prayers were combined with a sacrifice. The writer of CCT 4, 6f (A3, 4c) asks to “bring a sacrifice before your god and pray for me”, which suggests a visit to a temple. And AKT 6, 287 (A3,

171. Examples are Bēla(t)-šērim (see Dercksen in *KIM* 1, 53) and Ea-šarrum (AKT 5, 53:35).

172. See 94/k 1296 = *AoF* 35: 152, note 28. and 94/k 1119, to be published as AKT 6, 1047; AKT 9a, 113, lists *ikribū* of Šarra-mātēn and Išhara and of Adad.

173. There are dozens of names beginning with *ilī*, “My god...”. In addition we have names ending in *-ilī*, which could be a vocative, a predicate or the subject; e.g. Anum-ilī, Izzizam-ilī (cf. the use of this verb in k/k 108 and AKT 9, 156, above A3, 5a), Maši-ilī, Ṭāb-ilī, Zikur-ilī. Note also E-amši-ilī (87/k 2:3).

174. See Dercksen in *Anatolica* 41 (above note 141).

175. One damaged reference (B3, 4c) has “before Aššur and [...]”.

176. It is not impossible that prayers to Aššur and family gods together were uttered in the same locale, if some of the gods venerated in Kanesh had their domicile Aššur’s shrine in the building of the *kārum*.

177. Kt 94/k 184 (B1A, 5g) is interesting, because it first suggests to come to Assur to pray “before Aššur and your god”, but at the end, when repeating this advice, it mentions only Aššur.

5d) advises “to go down here to the temple of the god to ask mercy from the god and to make supplications before your god”.¹⁷⁸ Šīmat-Ištar in Assur tells Alāhum in Kt c/k (737:20-23) (courtesy J.G. Dercksen) that the silver she had received was spent on “beseeching the god(s)” (*ana i-li* ²³ *ana sallu'im*) when she had fallen ill, which implies that she spent money on sacrifices. Unfortunately, our knowledge about the cultic realities in ancient Assur and Kanesh is minimal, and we do not know whether the gods mentioned had their own shrines or chapels, or were venerated in the temples of the main gods. Aššur, of course, had his shrine in Kanesh, in the *kārum* building, whose *hamrum* housed his statue and dagger (*patrum*/GÍR), by which oaths were sworn.¹⁷⁹ Other colonies must have had a similar provisions, but we only know of his temple in the *kārum* Uršu, thanks to a letter it wrote to Kanesh, when thieves had “picked it clean” (*bētum laqqut*) and had stolen i.a. “the golden sun disc on Aššur’s breast”.¹⁸⁰ AKT 6, 468, which describes the inventory of a shrine in Kanesh, mentions “tables which are in front of his god, one chair in front of Aššur, one cup in front of Šarra-matēn”, which suggests that (the statutes of) several gods were in the same room; the editors of the text call it a private chapel.¹⁸¹ Dercksen,¹⁸² commenting on c/k 18, assumes that “part of the house of Šu-Ištar in Kanesh may have served as the sanctuary of Ištar”, and there must also have been a sacred locale where women could swear by Ištar’s *huppum* (see above note 142), which might have been kept in the shrine of Aššur in the *kārum* building. A temple of the sungod is mentioned in 89/k 285:15-17 (courtesy Y. Kawasaki), which lists a payment of some silver “(when) they brought you safely to the temple of the sungod”.¹⁸³ There is thus far no evidence that the houses of the Assyrians traders contained facilities for a domestic cult of the family god or the ghosts of the ancestors.

We may compare the situation in OB letters, where similar prayers (frequently rendered by the iterative stem of *karābum*) are or will be made¹⁸⁴ to create goodwill or to render thanks for a favor (in cases where the promise occurs immediately after a request). In most cases they are addressed to Šamaš and Marduk,¹⁸⁵ presumably because invoking the favor of these great, “national” gods was considered more effective for the addressee than the favor of the writer’s personal god. But in a few cases other gods also occur, in *AbB* (13, 85:26), Annunītum after Šamaš and Marduk, in 2, 82:30-31, Marduk and Sīn-Amurru, “who pray for my father”. In 11, 120:12, the prayer is addressed to Sīn, the moon god, called “the one who loves you”, and in 1, 119:11-13, we have a promise to pray to “Šamaš, Marduk and my lord Bunene”. It is possible that one or the other of these was venerated as family god, but this is difficult to prove.

178. The transition from *bēt ilim* to *mahar ilika* could indicate that the family god had a shrine or cella in the temple of another god. This is also attested for Babylonia, where CT 4, 9a:6-7 (see above, note 43) mentions the division of an inheritance between brothers took place “in the temple of the god of the town and their god” (*ina bīt DINGIR URU u ilišumi*).

179. See the references in *UAR* 7, A, 5. Note also 87/k 381:18, 2 UDU ša É Aššur.

180. See for this letter *OACC* 261-262.

181. Presented by G. Barjamovic and M.T. Larsen in *AoF* 35: 153-154, who call it “an inventory of a private chapel”. These items were listed when the house (or its main room, *ekallum*) of an Assyrian trader was emptied out. The editors mention the possibility that the gods may have been family gods, but this is unlikely for Aššur.

182. See above, note 141.

183. ⅓ GÍN 7 ½ ŠE/KÙ.BABBAR *ana É^{be-et}d*UTU *ušallimūka/taddin*; ^dUTU in Kanesh could be the Assyrian Šamaš or the local sun god.

184. See for the prayer for the addressee as a way of showing one’s gratitude in Old Babylonian letters, Sallaberger (1999: 112ff.), especially 125-26, where only a few of the ca. two dozen occurrences of *karābum* are mentioned. A few letters mention that the writer has done so in the past, *AbB* 1, 128:13, cf. 9, 12:9. Occasionally specifications are added, such as “praying every day”, “by day and by night”, “at the morning and evening offering”, cf. *AbB* 2, 89:9; 7, 28:14-16; 10, 131:4-6; 11, 106:8; 13, 96:8.

185. We also meet other gods, known as the main gods of particular cities, such as Ba’u and Ninigirsu (at home in Lagash) in *AbB* 12, 180:4-5; Enki and Ninurta in *AbB* 11, 27:23. In ARM 10, 92:22-23 a very unhappy woman, who probably had been sent by the king to Aleppo, promises to pray for him “before Addu and Hepat”, apparently the main gods of the city where she lives.

3.9. The material presence of the gods

3.9.1. “Golden gods”

Praying “before a god” implies that (s)he is somehow materially present, in a relief, a statue or a figurine. One might also think of a divine emblem or symbol that represented her/him and by which, as many texts state, one swore the oath,¹⁸⁶ but prayers to the emblems of the gods are not mentioned in OA. What we do have are several references to the existence of “golden gods” that belonged to traders and were considered a valuable asset. They appear when a (dead) trader’s possessions are listed, and the best example is in 01/k 325b:23,¹⁸⁷ an agreement about the division of the inheritance of Š. It stipulates that his daughter Z., an *ugbaltu*-priestess, will continue to live in his house that was inherited by his son-in-law H. “If H. and his wife treat Z. badly or a second *arhalum* comes to live in the house,²³ H. will give her (Z.) the golden gods of her father (DINGIR-*li* ša GUŠKIN²⁴ ša *abiša*), her jewellery (*šukuttaša*)... and she will leave for her brothers”. In m/k 69:18,¹⁸⁸ where a man enumerates all the valuables his brother had appropriated after their father’s death, he also mentions a few precious objects (*uqurtum*), small pieces of gold and silver and “ $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel, the gods of our father” ($\frac{1}{3}$ GÍN *i-lu* ša *abini*). 93/k 566:7 (courtesy C. Michel) states that the capital assets (*šaltum*) of the dead E. comprise, alongside his house and slaves, also “10 shekels of gold, his gods” (10 GÍN GUŠKIN *i-lu-šu*). *Ilū* as valuables also occur in AKT 6, 592:12-13, where a box (*tamalakkum*) containing silver cups and “ $5\frac{1}{2}$ shekels golden gods” ($5\frac{1}{2}$ GÍN *i-lu-ū/ša* KÛ.KI) are left to somebody for safekeeping. The writer of the difficult letter AKT 6, 788:13-14 (courtesy M.T. Larsen) states “we will put the golden gods under seal so that one may bring them to her” (a women in need of money).¹⁸⁹ Occasionally, the reference is simply to *ilū*, “the gods”, e.g. in c/k (185: 42-44), in a verdict of *kārum* Kanesh, where a person has to swear that “he did not take the tablets, gods and seal” of a trader (*tuppē i-le-e u kunukkam la ilqe’u*). Similarly, in n/k (1345:7) (courtesy of S. Çeçen), where it is mentioned that Šimat-Suen paid “the price of the bronzes and of you god(s)” (*šim ZABAR ū i-li-kà*) –where they were sold?– to cover (part of) a debt.

“Golden gods” as valuable items also figure as pledges. The writer of AKT 5, 35, who had paid silver on behalf of K., states: “I hold the golden gods (l. 5, DINGIR-*le* GUŠKIN) of I. and a certified tablet for 100 shekels of silver, recording the debt of K., A. and E., as pledge (*šapartum*). When... come and pay me the silver I will release the gods” (l. 14, *i-le uššar*). In the pledged “certified tablet” which was pledged, preserved as AKT 5, 46, we read: “Gods, twenty in number, of gold, belonging to I., have been deposited as pledge. The gods have been put under the seal of 3 *bēru*-officials.”¹⁹⁰ The *kārum* verdict a/k (447a) arranges the acquisition of a large amount of copper that will be used to obtain the release of Š.’s golden gods that had been given as pledge to an Anatolian.¹⁹¹ Kt c/k (784a/b:12-13) (courtesy of J.G. Dercksen) records a heavily secured *be’ulātum* loan of 1 mina of silver, adding: “his (the debtor’s) gods have been deposited as pledge” (l.12, *i-lu-šu a-šapartim nadū*). And the writer of the letter c/k 590 (courtesy of Dercksen) states in lines 8-12, “I needed 1 mina of silver and you loaned it to me; I put my gods under seal and gave them to you and you hold them as pledge”.¹⁹²

The “golden gods” always appear as a group. AKT 5, 46 mentions a number of 20, and a number is also referred to in 93/k (665:16-18) (courtesy of C. Michel), where a man heard somebody say: “These gods belong to A., (but) the number of gods I do not know”.¹⁹³ They apparently were very small and weighed little, but the $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel of m/k (69:18) is surprising, for how many “gods” could have been made from ca. 3 grams of

186. See for Aššur’ dagger, his *šugarriā’um* (also in the dual) and his “great *sikkātum*”, K.R. Veenhof, *JEOL* 45: 113-117, and for the *huppum* of Ishtar, above note 140.

187. Published by İ. Albayrak, She will live, eat and be anointed together with them, in *Fs. M.T. Larsen*, 13-20.

188. K. Hecker, *Fs. M.T. Larsen* (286).

189. *i-li ša KÛ.KI lu niknukma lublūšim*; l. 28 mentions “the one who had your gods brought” (*mušēbil i-le-kà*).

190. 20 *i-lu-ū mu-nu-tām ša KÛ.KI/ša I. ana šapartim*¹⁴ *nadū i-lu-ū kunuk 3 berē kankū*. *Munuttam* is an accusative of relation, cf. GOA § 6.4.5.

191. *i-li ša KÛ.KI ša Š. 8 bēt nuā’im ušēššū*.

192. *i-li-a aknuk addinakkumma a-šapartim tukāl*.

193. *i-lu : anniuttum ša A. munūt i-le ula tde*.

gold? The weights of 10 shekels (ca. 85 grams) in 93/k (566:7) and of 5½ shekels in AKT 6, 592:12, even though we do not know how many gods were involved, are also small. The gods must have been miniature figurines or perhaps small sheets with the gods shown in *repoussé* technique.¹⁹⁴ Their value may have rested less in the amount of gold than in their emotional and religious value, which guaranteed that the person who had handed them over as pledge would certainly do everything to get them back. Several texts mention that such groups of gods, when transferred, were put under seal, in AKT 5, 46 even by the *bēru*-officials, presumably in a pouch or small bag. The shipment of the gods in AKT 6, 788 to a woman in financial problems may have allowed her to use them as pledge to borrow money.

3.9.2. Statuettes and figurines

The constant use of the plural excludes identification with the family god. Moreover, the qualification *ša abiša/abini* in m/k 69 and 01/k 325 is different from *ili abini*, “the god of my father”, because the possessive suffix in *ilūšu* in c/k 784 and 93/k 506 refers to the person who owned them. If these gods were figurines of deified ancestors, this could explain why, in 01/k/325, they are assigned to the testator’s daughter, a priestess, who continued to live in her father’s house (which her brothers had left), under which, according to OA custom, the ancestors would be buried. She could “provide for them” and should continue to do so if she left the house. This explanation could be based on a unique statement of a woman, probably also a priestess, in the letter c/k (266a:19-20): “I provide for *i-li* and the ghosts” (*i-li u eṭammē azannan*).¹⁹⁵ The combination of *i-li* and *eṭammē* is intriguing, and one might compare it with statements in texts from Emar, where the eldest son, who inherits the house, has the duty to invoke, honor and care for “the gods and the dead” (*ilē u mētē*). *Family Religion* (55-56) assumes that the two words are a hendiadys, and mean “deified ancestors”, the latter being called so “on account of their privileged status”, venerated “as the material symbols of the family ancestors”. But for the unique OA reference, half a millennium older than the Emar texts, interpretation as hendiadys is not necessary and difficult to prove. It would be acceptable if *i-li* indeed means *ilē*, “the gods”, since a plural would exclude both the family god and/or the god whom the lady, a priestess, served. But a singular, “my god”, seems more likely and both her god and the ghosts of the ancestors have to be provided for, the god by sacrifices and other gifts, the “ghosts” by invoking them and offering them food and drink. Šimat-Ištar’s words may be compared with those of Aššur-taklāku, who in his letter KTK 18 complains about his financial problems¹⁹⁶ and writes in lines 7-9: “Would tomorrow some stranger give us even one shekel of silver so that I can maintain our paternal house and the ghosts?” (*bēt abini u eṭammē ukāl*). Both texts might refer to the expenses to be made for the *kispum* ritual,¹⁹⁷ but this word never occurs in OA, and the excavation reports do not mention private cultic facilities in Assyrian houses, under which the dead were buried. Although the dead ancestors were certainly held in high esteem and were invoked (see above § 3.4, B2), there is still no clear evidence of their cult, as it is available for later periods. We need more proof before we can identify the OA “golden gods” as representing dead ancestors.

An interesting reference to *ilū* is found in the letter 89/k (226:18) (courtesy Y. Kawasaki), which mentions “statuettes of gods” (*mazzāzū ša ilē*).¹⁹⁸ “The small *ikribū* must be readily available...⁹ When you

194. Cf. the “Hittite god from Kültepe”, published by F. Kulakoğlu in *Mem. Garelli* (13-19). He assumes that it had been fixed on something and considers it a “depiction of a god kept at a private home,” referring to the mention of the figurine of a deity in 0/k 325:18 (where, however, *ilū* is in the plural). The weight of the gold folio is not given.

195. The writer was Šimat-Ištar, daughter of Ali-ahum, the owner of the Kt c/k archive (see J.G. Derksen, *KIM* 1, 47-58). Her name suggests that she was as priestess (like Šimat-Aššur of AKT 4, 63 [A2, 4a], who prays before “Aššur, my god”), since Šimat-DN is a name typical for such ladies (see Michel 2009b, esp. 152). She lived in Assur and struggled with the financial problems of the family, so that “providing for my god and the ghosts” apparently had become a problem.

196. Lines 4-6, “there are fights and the people who look out for the days of our misfortune get numerous; to whom should I and you <look for help>?” (*teṣētum⁵ ibaššima āmer umēni ima⁶ idū⁶ anāku ana mannim u attī a-mannim <nidagga>*).

197. The verb *ka’ulūm*, however, may not refer to the care for the house and the ancestors buried underneath it, but simply to keeping it as family property, since his problems might force him to sell it. See for *kispum* Stol (2017), and for what we know about the “ghosts”, Michel (2008b and 2009).

198. I follow Derksen (1997: 84), who first identified *mazzāzum* as “statuette”, rejecting Hirsch’s translation “Pfand”, which is also found in *CAD M/I*, 238, 6. A second OA reference, KTS (24:11), is quoted there under 3’, without translation, but also means a statuette. It deals with a promised, but not yet delivered votive gift: “The god treats our paternal house (family) badly because of the *mazzāzum*”. Kt 89/k 432:1-4 (courtesy of Y. Kawasaki) mentions “30 minas of copper being a votive gift for

arrive and deposit the final installment of the silver, the votive gift for (fashioning) a statuette of the god Aššur, we will bring the statuette into (the temple) and I too will then give (my share of) that silver, so that we can bring into (the temple) five little statuettes of gods”.¹⁹⁹ We may compare ICK (2, 147) (also mentioned by Dercksen), which describes the division of an inheritance, and, after stating the share of the eldest son, writes, “as for the statuettes, votive gifts of his father, they will bring them into (the temple)”.²⁰⁰ These statuettes, called votive gifts, were presumably made of gold and not of silver, for the writer of 89/k 226 states that he will also contribute his share of that silver, which apparently had to be paid for having the golden gods made. A comparable statement is found in AKT 6, 855:10 (courtesy of Larsen), “On the day E., B. and A. pay their shares of the silver of a votive offering, a statuette (*mazzāzum*) of (promised by) Š., L. must also pay his share”.²⁰¹ This is confirmed by 89/k 432 (quoted in note 199), which mentions a large amount of copper in this connection and a statuette of copper as votive gift is very unlikely.²⁰²

ICK (2, 147), which shows that the statuettes belonged to and were in the house of the deceased father, but had to be brought into the temple, and Kt 89/k 226 use *mazzāzum*, “statuette”, and not *ilum*. Indeed, the “golden gods” (*ilū*), mentioned above, are no votive gifts, but property of a particular trader or his heirs, they are not meant for a temple and can be even be used as pledges. The occurrence of statuettes (*mazzāzum*) therefore cannot provide an answer to the question who the numerous (in one case twenty!) “golden gods” were. We know that the Assyrians invoked and venerated (also by offering them votive gifts) various gods alongside Aššur and their family god. The golden gods thus might have been depictions of (some of) these gods, but we cannot completely rule out the possibility that the Old Assyrians also had figurines of deified ancestors, or that they were apotropaic house gods of the *lamassu*-type, as mentioned above in § 2.4. A comparison that comes to mind are the *ṛrāfīm* of Laban that, according to the story in Genesis 31, were taken along by his daughter Rachel and which her father called “my gods” (*ḗlōhay*). They must have been small figurines, which Rachel could hide in a saddle bag. Old Testament scholars disagree about their nature.²⁰³

3.9.3. *ilē ina šērika/libbika išu*

“Gods” in the plural (as the occasional spelling *i-le-e* shows) occur also in the expression *ilē ina šēr/ina libbi* + pron. suffix *išu*, which is attested a few times. It means literally “I have gods to the charge of/to claim from somebody” and it uses the formulation for describing a financial liability current in debt-notes and memos that list existing claims (*kaspam iššēr/ina libbi PN išu*). Examples are:

a. c/k 265:15-18 (courtesy Dercksen). “As for the 1½ mina of silver which P. owes to A., if he does not produce witnesses (to prove it) ¹⁸ DINGIR-*le iššērišu išu*”.

b. AKT 6, 1060:16-22. “I left to A. 1 mina 20⅓ shekels of silver, *ikribū* of Aššur, but he denied it to me (*ittakranni*) *i-li iššēria išu*”. The same claim is listed in AKT 6, 1061:1-4, which adds that it was left to A. “to lend it out at interest” (*ana šibtim tadānim*).

c. AKT(8, 186:23-26. “(As for) the rest of the silver, whatever you still owe me, ²⁵ *i-le-e ina libbika išu*”.

Aššur’s temple? of a statuette” (30 *ma-na* URUDU/[š]a^a *ik-ri-be/É?* A-šūr/ša *ma-za-zi-im*; É? is damaged, but *ša*, restored by Dercksen, is less likely).

199. ⁵ *ikribū* : *šahhurūtum/lu šaltū... ina alākia* ¹⁰ *ināmi kaspam ša ikribē/ša ma-za-zi-im/ša* ⁴ Aššur *tašbītam/tašakkunumal/ma-za-za-am nušerrubu* ¹⁵ *ū anāku kaspam šuāti/laddinma 5 ma-za-ze-e/ša i-le-e ša-hu-ru-tim/lu nušerreb*. I translate “small statuettes of gods”, rather than “statuettes of small (minor) gods”, because we have no evidence on the difference between great and minor gods. The reference must be to the size of the statuettes, as indicated by line 5 where “small votive gifts” is an abbreviation.

200. *aššumi ma-za-ze/ikribē ša abišu ušerrebū*.

201. AKT 6, 855:5-15, ⁵ *ina ānim/ša E./B/ū A/kaspam ša ikribē* ¹⁰ *ša mazzāzim ša Š.Jqāssunu mala/išaqquṭū/ū L.Jqāssu* ¹⁵ *išaqqaḫ*.

202. Cf. the short reference in KTS (2, 41:28), “7 minas of copper *ša ma¹-za-zi-im*”.

203. Its etymology is not clear, but it has been connected with Hittite *tarpiš*, equated in a lexical list with Akkadian *šēdu*; see H.A. Hoffner, “Hittite *tarpiš* and Hebrew *terāphīm*”, *JNES* 27: 61-70, who elaborates a proposal made by B. Landsberger. He describes a *tarpiš* as “a spirit which can on some occasions be regarded as protective and on other as malevolent”. See now the article *terāphīm* by K. van der Toorn and T. J. Lewis in *Theologische Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. VIII (Stuttgart-Köln 1995), 766-778, who interpret them as statuettes of (deified) ancestors.

d. AKT 5, 40:24-28. The widow Kapsiya renounces all financial claims on the Hanana's daughter Hudida and his sons, but there follows: "Should N. (a son of Hanana) prove to owe an additional amount of silver of Hanana (to her) ²⁷ *i-le-e illibbiša Kapsiya tišu*" (where the suffix -ša must refer to Hudida).

e. AKT 5, 51:18-26. "I gave her (the widow of Il-bāni) 2 minas of silver..., she is satisfied (*šabbu'at*), she will not come back on it. Should she not give me the tablets (debt-notes) in Kanesh *i-le* ²⁶ *iššēriša išu*".

The use of the terminology for a liability could suggest to understand this expression as "to have a claim on the (statuettes of) the debtor's gods", because, as noted above, a person's "golden gods" could be yielded by a defaulting debtor as pledges. And that in text b. the silver owed is a votive gift for Aššur might indicate that the liability had a religious aspect. But this is ruled out by the other occurrences in "secular" contexts and by the fact that silver of b. in a parallel text is said to be given "for lending out at interest". Claiming the gods (as security) in text b. would make it a kind of penalty or compensation for a wrong claim, which is very unlikely. I cannot explain why the expression is so rare, while financial claims and their consequences occur in hundreds of texts. According to Kouwenberg (as mentioned in the comment on the edition of text c), the expression may have had a figurative meaning. Since in OA texts the gods are regularly invoked to stress a person's sincerity and the truth of a statement, and the oath by the gods is current to guarantee it, mentioning that one "imposes" (*ina šēr*) the gods on somebody could stress the moral nature of his obligation, implying that the gods would punish the one who does not live up to it. Understood in this way, the expression has no link with the fact the traders owned small figurines of "golden gods", but is an additional proof of the role of the gods as guarantors of truth and honesty.²⁰⁴

3.10. Conclusion

It has become clear that the families of Old Assyrian traders venerated and regularly invoked family gods, in particular to stress their sincerity and honesty and to buttress their claims on colleagues and friends. And that writers of letters, grateful to their addressee(s) or reacting to problems the latter had encountered, often promised to pray for them before Aššur and such family gods. Such promises are also found in Old Babylonian letters, but prayers addressed to a family god are rare (see the examples mentioned at the end of § 2.5), although this is to some extent compensated by a few letters addressed to what seem to have been "family gods", such as *AbB* 9, 141, addressed to "the god of my father", *AbB* (5, 140+), addressed to Ninsianna, and 12, 99 addressed to "My Lord Amurru".²⁰⁵ On the other hand, invocations such as the ones of Aššur and various family gods, asking them to be witnesses of what is said or done, to stress the writer's sincerity and to make emotional statements, are almost absent in OB letters.²⁰⁶ An explanation could be that writers and recipients of OA letters lived in different countries, and could not discuss their often serious problems and differences of opinion in personal encounters, so that their letters contained more elements that were at home in direct speech.

The number of "family gods" must have been substantial, although we know only a dozen or so by name, and many remain anonymous behind the designations "my/your/his/our god" and "the god of my/your/his/our father". New archives will certainly increase the number of identified family gods, but it remains a fact that the "national" god Aššur and most "great gods" of the Mesopotamian pantheon (Ellil, Ea, Suen,

204. A difficult occurrence of *ilā* is in AKT 4, 28:28, in a letter to a woman in Anatolia, where I read, after collation by Dercksen: "Why did you write (*ta-āš-pu-ri-ni*) me as follows: 'Clear/purify my gods and (= since?) I have used up the barley you left behind' (*i-li-a ebbibma/ŠE-am ša tēzibu ag-da-[mar]*),³⁰ should I send you grain from the City of Assur?" The context suggests that "clearing the gods" could be a way to obtain money to buy grain, which reminds me of the letter AKT 6, 788:13-14 (quoted above), "we will put the golden gods under seal so that one may bring them to her", which implies, since the recipient is a woman in financial problems, that she could pledge or even sell them to obtain money to help her out. "Clearing/purifying" is used in OA for making free of claims, but what it means in our text remains unclear.

205. Assuming that Amurru is here a "family god", who is called the one "who has created me" and we read the wish "may my family not be dispersed". See for *AbB* (5, 140+), F.R. Kraus, *RA* 65: 27-36. A different case is *AbB* (13, 164), addressed to the goddess Ninmug, who is approached as the wife of the god Išum, who "will listen to what you say", just like more often spouses of gods are asked to intercede with their husband. See in general for OB letters to gods note a. to *AbB* (12, 99) and Sallaberger (1999: 209).

206. Emotion is expressed in some OB letters by means of the exclamation *aššum DN*, "by DN!", some examples of which, mentioning the gods Šamaš (one qualified as *bēl kittim*), Ea and Tišpak, were presented by the present author in *JCS* 30: 186-188. Cf. also *Šamaš dīnī lidīn*, "my Šamaš judge my case!", *AbB* 5, 159:8'.

Šamaš) do not figure as such. That Adad and Ištar do must be due to the importance of their cult and temples in ancient Assur. The large number of families also implies that several of them must have venerated the same god, which in some cases may be due to a shared family history, which we cannot reconstruct. It is uncertain whether the preponderance of some gods (Amurru, Ilabrat, Ištar-ZA.AT) reflects their “popularity”. Their choice and veneration must be rooted in the history of the families, which remains unknown. While it is not unlikely that the identity of the family god of some Old Babylonian dynasties, as pointed out in § 2.7, reflects western, “Amorrite” roots, this is different for ancient Assur. Neither the texts nor the cult of these gods provides evidence of “Amorrite roots”, and the frequency in invocations of a god like Amurru could be mainly due to the fact that he figures prominently in the limited number of archives that have been well edited and studied. On the other hand, the claim that Amurru as “a divine concept was a secondary construct derived from the geographic and ethnic meaning of the term Amurru” (see above § 1.2), has to cope with the fact that this god was venerated by several families in ancient Assur already before the end of the 20th century BCE, and that he received precious votive gifts, which were used to supply funds or merchandise to traders, which suggests that he had a temple in Assur (although it is thus far not mentioned in the texts). A final judgment is difficult because of our ignorance of the history of the OA families and of the social and cultic realities of ancient Assur. Although the number of texts now available is substantial, new archives may require adaptations of the view presented here, in particular if they shed more light on domestic and public cultic practices and facilities.

Abbreviations and Literature

The abbreviations are those of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Bd 14 (Berlin 2016), III-LV. Some additions are listed below. See for a detailed Old Assyrian bibliography *OAB*.

- AKT** *Ankara Kültepe Tabletleri/Ankaraner Kültepe Textel/Kültepe Tabletleri.*
 1990 AKT 1, TTKY VI – 33, E. Bilgiç, H. Sever, C. Günbattı & S. Bayram. Ankara.
 1995 AKT 2, TTKY VI – 33a, E. Bilgiç & S. Bayram. Ankara.
 1995 AKT 3, *Texte der Grabungscampagne 1970*, FAOS Beiheft 3, E. Bilgiç & C. Günbattı. Stuttgart.
 2006 AKT 4 (*Kt o/k*), TTKY VI-33b, I. Albayrak. Ankara.
 2010 AKT 5, *The Archive of Kuliya, son of Ali-ahum*, TTKY VI-33c), K. R. Veenhof. Ankara.
 2010-2014 AKT 6, *The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family*, vol. 1-3 (TTKY VI-33d- a,b,c), M. T. Larsen. Ankara.
 2014 AKT 7, *Aššur-rē't Ailesinin Arşivi*, I (TTKY VI -33c-a), S. Bayram & R. Kuzuoğlu. Ankara.
 2017 AKT 8, *The Archive of Elamma, son of Iddin-Suen, and his Family (Kt. 91/k 285-568 and Kt. 92/k 94-187)*, (TTKY VI-33f), K. R. Veenhof. Ankara.
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 2016 AKT 10, *Anadolulu Tüccarlar Şarabunuwa ve Peruwa'nın Arşivleri* (TTKY VI-33-h), C. Günbattı. Ankara.
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 1995ff *Archivum Anatolicum* (Anadolu Arşivleri). Ankara.
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 2015 *The Archive of Ali-ahum (I). The Documents Excavated in N-O-P/20 in 1950*, *KIM* 1: 47-58.

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Klaas R. Veenhof
Burg. van Lennepweg 3 A-5
2101RE Heemstede
The Netherlands
Email: k.r.veenhof@hetnet.nl